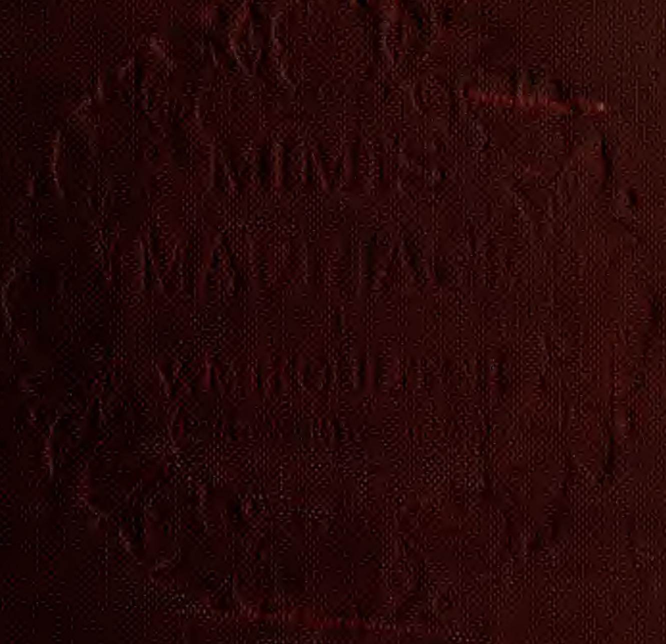
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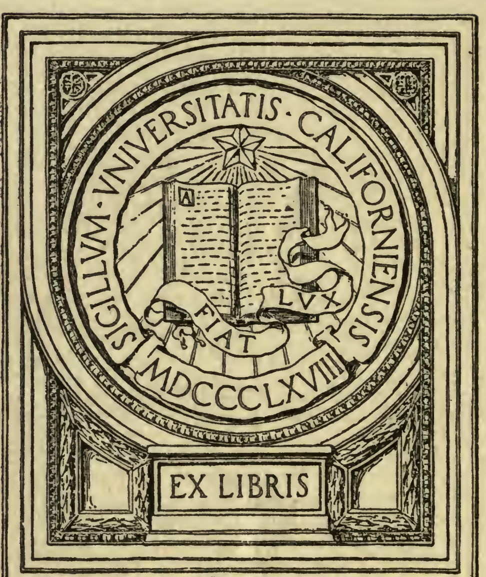
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MIMI'S MARRIAGE

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MIMI'S MARRIAGE

BY

V. MIKOULITCH

(LIDIA IVANOVNA VESELITSKAYA)

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

C. HAGBERG WRIGHT, LL.D.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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INTRODUCTION

The genius of Turgeniev and Tolstoy, of Dostoevsky and Gorky, has given fame and distinction to the Russian novel, but while the principal works of these great writers and their fellows are well known to English readers, the women novelists of Russia have been left almost untouched by the translator. Yet there are many authoresses of talent in the literary world of Russia at the present day; notably Madame Dmitrieva, born 1859, of peasant parents. Her first novel was entitled *From the Heart not from the Head.* Two of her best-known books are *Mityukha, the Schoolmaster*, and *In Various Directions.* She has said that "her first school was

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the village street, and her teachers, the grey old village folk and dire need."

Other writers of ability are Olga Chumina (born 1864), who has translated several poems by François Coppée, and also produced a play entitled *The Flicker that Went Out;* Madame Smirnov, author of the powerful novel, *The Salt of the Earth;* M. V. Krestovskaya (born 1862), whose stories of theatrical life have the charm of simplicity and truth, and whose *Woman-Artist* appeared in the *Journal des Debats;* Madame Verbitskaya, who attained an extraordinary popularity with her daring novel *The Keys of Happiness;* and Madame Lidia Ivanovna Veselitskaya, who, under the pseudonym of V. Mikoulitch, has written sketches of Russian society which are full of humour and clever characterisation. The best known are the series entitled

Mimi's Marriage, *Mimi* (or Mimotchka) *at the Springs*, and *Mimi Poisons Herself*, which have been translated into no less than six European languages.

The writer of these genial satires on the weaknesses of her sex was born in 1857. She belonged to a noble family with estates in Southern Russia, and was educated at the Pavlovsk Institute, one of the great schools for women in Russia. Soon after her début in society, she married an officer in the Russian army.

She began her literary career with some simple tales intended for young people; *Family Evenings*, *In the Family and in the School*, and *Of Children's Reading*, but in 1883 she struck a bolder note with *Mimotchka, the Bride*, or *Mimi's Marriage*, which made its first appearance in the *Vestnik Evropy*, a leading Russian monthly review. But it was not until the second of the series, *Mimotchka at the Springs*, was published seven years later that " V. Mikoulitch " sprang to her present position of widespread popularity. The witty superficiality of the chapters descriptive of Mimi's girlhood develops in *Mimi at the Springs* into a brilliant, incisive study of a selfish, empty-headed, and exceedingly pretty young woman. The analysis of her character is so penetrating and pitiless that Tolstoy, who admired the book, remarked that " the author must be a man, as no woman would be so frank in writing of her own sex."

Mimi bears a surface resemblance to Anna Karénina, but she escapes the whirlpool of passion that engulfed Tolstoy's ill-starred heroine, and glides almost unscathed through the romantic episode of *l'homme au chien.* The latter, though only lightly sketched in, is a cleverly suggested portrait of a cultivated and elegant Russian of the wealthy upper classes who, if he permits himself an occasional lapse from conjugal fidelity, trims the balance by the " correction " of his manners. He is a past master in the art of guiding a novice through the mazes of flirtation and emerging free from entanglement.

At the end of it all Mimi's heart is touched but not broken. Perhaps she was even slightly disillusioned by the calmness with which her " correct " admirer met the crisis of her departure from the Caucasus.

The secondary characters are also well drawn; notably that of the mother of Mimi, a self-sacrificing " doormat " whose mission in life is to make things smooth for her cherished daughter; but to those who seek to discover the personality of an author through the medium of his puppets, and are ready to find a veiled autobiography in the career of the hero or heroine, it may be suggested that the character of Vava, the lonely, idealistic, day-dreaming cousin of Mimi, is far nearer to the writer's heart than the fascinating heroine who fills the title-rôle.

Vava has many traits in common with the boy-hero of Tolstoy's *Childhood*, which is only another way of saying that in Russia young people of both sexes are more thoughtful, introspective, and inclined to philosophise upon abstract subjects than the romps and tomboys of our English nurseries and schoolrooms.

The sympathetic earnestness of the description of Vava's love of solitude in the Caucasian woods, amounts to an avowal that the author also has felt the joy of loneliness shared with crickets, lady-birds, butterflies, and bees, "while over her head a great eagle soars calmly up, as if carrying on his broad wings her dreams, her hopes, and her faith in God." In scenes like these the prevailing tone of playful irony yields to one of genuine emotion, and one is tempted to wish that the writer had given her inner convictions fuller play. V. Mikoulitch has, however, struck a deeper note of human feeling in her recent story of humble life entitled *The Bath*—a village tragedy turning upon the incident of the theft of an old woman's petticoat in the public bath-house; but it seems doubtful whether her success in this new vein will equal that of her earlier works.

To the background of *Mimi at the Springs* may be ascribed some measure of its popularity. The Caucasus has inspired many of the greatest of the writers of Russia, and to the Russian reading public it is still dear as the land of legend and romance.

Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy (in his early masterpiece *The Cossacks*), have each revelled in the beauty of the great southern mountain range, with its luxuriant forests, its snow-clad peaks, and innumerable springs of mineral water.

The Slav temperament, with its swift transitions from feverish gaiety to nervous exhaustion, finds peculiar relief in reverting to the simple life of the Caucasian watering-places. There many a disgraced official or disappointed genius has regained contentment if not happiness, and realised, despite the pain of exile, that there is a sweetness in adversity.

In describing the scenery of the Caucasus, V. Mikoulitch has followed not unworthily in the steps of her great forerunners, and shown that her cynicism is the mere protective armour of one who is at heart an idealist.

A sequel, *Mimi Poisons Herself*, appeared in the *Vestnik Evropy* in 1893, but was received more coldly than its predecessor, owing, perhaps, to the disappointment of readers with a taste for tragedy, since Mimi does not succeed in poisoning herself after all.

C. HAGBERG WRIGHT.

MIMI'S MARRIAGE

I

MIMOTCHKA—*is engaged!* Mimotchka[1] is once more engaged, and this time, it seems, engaged in earnest. She receives congratulations, pays visits to her relations, and accepts presents from them. Her aunts question her with curiosity and interest about the details of her trousseau; her uncles bring their best wishes, joking at Mimotchka and teasing her, while Mimotchka slightly blushes and casts down her innocent-looking eyes.

"And are you very much in love with your *fiancé?*" they ask Mimotchka.

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[1] Mimotchka, or Mimi, is sometimes used as a diminutive name for Marie.

"As yet, I know my *fiancé* too little to be in love with him, but I . . . respect him," she answers.

What a reply! Nobody had expected she would answer so *cleverly*. All the aunts think she has answered very cleverly, though up till now Mimotchka had never shown any more cleverness than would be required of so pretty a girl as she.

She respected her *fiancé*. And really Spiridon Ivanovitch was quite worthy of her respect. He was well off, had a good rank, and occupied a sufficiently prominent position in the Government service; he was no longer very young, but still he was not very old; he was not handsome, was bald, perhaps rather too stout, but still he was a fine-looking man, and might have aspired to a rich bride.

And really how lucky Mimotchka is

I know that many girls of her age among her friends, and especially their mothers, are ready to burst with envy and vexation that they could not get Spiridon Ivanovitch for themselves, and say that he was mercilessly hunted down, and that Mimotchka was thrown at his head. . . . But, goodness me, what won't envious women's tongues say! Instead of repeating such absurdities, let us rather rejoice with Mimotchka, rejoice with our whole heart, as do her good aunts.

"Well, thank God, thank God!" says Aunt Sophy; "I am so glad about Mimotchka. I do hope she will be happy with him. It's just as well that he isn't young; Mimi is still such a child, she requires an elderly, serious man. . . ."

"Of course it's best that he isn't young," confirms Aunt Mary; "it's easier to keep such a husband under her thumb. And, as a good aunt, I advise you, Mimotchka, to take your Spiridon Ivanovitch well in hand in time."

"I told you that everything was for the best," says Aunt Julia, in conclusion. "Just think how fortunate it is that you 'broke it off' with that other good-for-nothing fellow!"

And really everything was for the best. Mimotchka's first *fiancé* was a brilliant young guardsman, with beautiful shiny boots, black moustaches, curly chestnut hair, and a gold-mounted pince-nez. Mimotchka met him for the first time at an evening party, where he led the dancing,[1] clinking his spurs, facetiously fanning himself with the fans and scented handkerchiefs of the ladies he danced with, smiling gaily to show his brilliantly white teeth, and with diabolical *entrain* calling out: "Ser-r-r-r-rez le rond! . . . Chaîne! . . ." He took a few turns with Mimotchka, admired her while she was waltzing with some one else, and, having ascertained what was the social position of her parents, asked to be presented to her.

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[1] At dances in Russia a leader or conductor is generally chosen, who directs and calls out the figures in the cotillion, mazourka, and quadrilles, which are more complicated than in England.

Then he took to calling, then he began to pay her attention, and finally made her an offer.

The brilliant guardsman and adroit dancer passed for a dangerous lady-killer. He flirted with all the pretty girls, widows, and married women that he was acquainted with, and was said to be the object of the affections of many of them. So that to carry him off from them all must have been very flattering to the vanity of both Mimotchka and her mamma.

Mimotchka accepted his offer, and was announced to be "*fiancée.*"

On this occasion Aunt Sophy gave a dance, Aunt Mary a dinner with champagne, and Aunt Julia a *folle-journée* with dancing, champagne, and a sleigh drive out of town.

The young man was respectful, attentive, and amiable to his *fiancée's* relations, and pleased them all.

"Do you know, Mimotchka," said Aunt Mary to her, "he is so nice, so very nice, that if I were only a little younger, on my word of honour, I should try and cut you out."

"Yes, you will make a handsome couple," confirmed Aunt Sophy.

"And you were quite right, my dear, to accept his offer," concluded Aunt Julia. "Such a *fiancé* is not met with every day. He's on the right road, and is sure to advance a great deal in the service."

The *fiancé* was not only "on the right road," but he was a "prince" besides, of a somewhat decayed family, certainly, but still he was a prince, and not an Eastern one. And, in addition to this, he was, he said, the nephew and sole heir of a rich, childless uncle, who owned land in the south, fifteen thousand *dessiatines*,[1] and coal mines as well.

Having given their blessing, Mimotchka's parents set about preparing a most luxurious trousseau for the future princess. It had to be done on credit, because their affairs were just then terribly involved. . . . However, as long as Mimotchka could remember, her parents' affairs had always been terribly involved; but this did not prevent their living without denying

[1] 40,500 acres.

themselves any pleasures, excepting always the pleasure of paying their debts, the sum of which had thus grown and grown like ill weeds.

In view of the approaching marriage, they again had to borrow from one and another, but to owe a few thousand of roubles more or less—what could that matter when the happiness of an only daughter was concerned? And then in the future Mimi would have the childless uncle's coal mines! All Mimotchka's relations made her presents. Aunt Sophy gave her a costly fur cloak (*shouba*). Aunt Mary an elegant tea-gown in vert-jaspe plush, lined with bleu-nuage satin, and trimmed with rich lace. Aunt Julia gave the silver. All the linen was marked with a princess's coronet. Aunt Julia said that this was not correct, because Mimotchka was not a princess, and the linen ought to be marked with the bride's monogram, and that it was ridiculous to be in such a hurry about the coronet, as if they could not conceal their joy that Mimotchka was going to be a princess. But Aunt Mary and Aunt Sophy backed up mamma, saying, "After all, what did it matter? Would not the linen that was made after the marriage be marked with a princess's coronet; why, then, not have the same marks on all at once?" And so all the linen was marked with a princess's coronet.

Before Mimotchka's engagement was officially announced, papa came to a clear understanding with the young man. He confessed that just at the present time his affairs were perhaps rather involved, and that he was not in a position to give anything to Mimotchka. . . . But he took on himself all the expenses of fitting up a nest for the young couple, and promised to help them afterwards, as far as was possible, by allowing his daughter a part of his income.

The young man, although he thanked papa for speaking so openly, warmly assuring him that in choosing Mimotchka he had not been guided by any interested motives, still could not hide some disappointment on hearing that Mimotchka was—portionless. He had never expected it, and openly said, that it would oblige him—not to give up his *fiancée*—oh no, certainly not!—but to put off the marriage to an indefinite period.

In his turn he confessed that just now he was passing through some rather unpleasant monetary difficulties. Of course, these difficulties could not give him any very serious anxiety while he was alone and an unmarried man, and, after all, his uncle's coal mines must come eventually to him; but none the less he would consider himself the most abject and dishonourable of men if, under the present circumstances, he were to allow himself to marry a portionless girl, that is, without waiting, if not for the death of the childless coal uncle, at any rate for some advancement in the service.

The prince added, that in the not very distant future he expected to be appointed to the command of a battalion, and that it would be very agreeable for him to be appointed to the command of a battalion in N——, a pretty, gay town, where life was not very expensive, and where he might somehow settle down and manage to live with his young wife, of course not without substantial help from papa and the childless uncle. If papa would like to make use of his influence and connections to advance the interests of his future son-in-law, perhaps he might hasten Mimotchka's marriage, and secure the happiness of the young people.

In conclusion, the *fiancé*, as a man of honour, plainly declared that he would only marry in the event of his being appointed to the above-mentioned battalion. Papa must arrange the nomination.

It was difficult, but the happiness of an only daughter is worth labouring for. Papa's toils and efforts were crowned with success. The future bridegroom received the command of the battalion, and went to N—— to accept it. The day of the wedding was already fixed, there remained but two weeks to it. But it was unexpectedly put off on account of mourning.

Poor papa died suddenly, died at a friend's house, almost at the card-table, from a stroke or a rupture of the heart—I cannot say which. A telegram announcing the catastrophe was sent off at once to the *fiancé*, but he did not even come for the funeral. This immediately struck all Mimotchka's relations unpleasantly, and especially her mamma, into whose heart there stole alarming suspicions. And her suspicions appeared well founded. When he returned to Petersburg the young man quite changed in his intercourse with his future bride and his future mother-in-law. It soon became evident that he was only looking out for a pretext to break off the engagement. He tried being jealous with his *fiancée*, made fun of her, corrected her, educated her, but Mimotchka had such an immovably angelic character, that, in spite of all his efforts, her intended could not succeed in quarrelling with her. Then he attacked mamma; there matters went easier, and the encounters soon took a dangerous turn. They began with reproaches, pin-pricks, innuendoes; then both sides came to open explanations.

The *fiancé* maintained that papa had promised to give Mimotchka two thousand four hundred roubles[1] a year.

Mamma maintained that papa had never made any such promise.

To this the *fiancé* replied that if so (that is, if they wished to deceive him and call him a liar to his face), then, as a man of honour, there only remained for him to . . .

Mamma did not allow the man of honour to finish his threats, but offered to give up all her pension to the young people, stipulating only that they should let her live with them. The prince had had very good quarters assigned to him in N——, in which he could easily spare a corner for mamma.

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[1] About £250.

But, on hearing this proposal, the *fiancé* announced categorically, that he would only marry in the event of mamma's giving up the whole of her pension to Mimotchka, and living herself where and how she liked, only not with them. He had seen too many examples of how mothers-in-law had ruined the conjugal happiness of their daughters not to wish to guard Mimotchka from the possibility of such unpleasantness in the future, more especially so as it already seemed sufficiently clear that he, personally, could not get on with his future mother-in-law.

The young man's impudence agitated mamma to such a degree that she went to complain of him to her sisters, asking their advice and help. The aunts were also agitated and consternated on hearing from mamma's lips that "this poor, miserable little prince, this guardsman *frotteur*, this *passez-moi le mot*, blackguard, wished, it seemed, to refuse to make Mimotchka happy!"

The aunts took the matter up warmly, and set to work to effect a reconciliation. They went from one to another, almost choked themselves with excitement, talked till their throats were dry, shrugged their shoulders, threw up their hands, severely discussed and judged the matter from all sides, admonished the young man, admonished mamma, and pitied and comforted the unfortunate Mimotchka.

"I don't understand how it can all finish," said Aunt Sophy, "but it seems to me that it would be really best for them to separate now. . . . Anyhow, he has shown himself a dishonourable fellow.

He got the command, and now he won't marry her!"

"But, you know," observed Aunt Mary, "speaking openly, one can understand that this marriage does not particularly charm him. After all, what has Mimotchka? She is pretty, certainly. But, all the same, what sort of a match is it for him? He understands that he can do a great deal better. . . . And you will see that he won't marry her. Of course, all these explanations are only a pretext. It's as clear as the day that he simply doesn't want to marry her."

"But he must be made to marry her," said Aunt Julia. "It's impossible to compromise a girl like that and go unpunished."

It finished by the aunts almost quarrelling among themselves; but all the same mamma received from the intended a long and eloquent epistle, in which he declared that it was time to put an end to these disagreeable misunderstandings. For some time past he had been clearly convinced, both of his *fiancée's* indifference towards him, and of the inevitability of unpleasant encounters with his future mother-in-law; so that he would consider himself the most abject and dishonourable of men if, weighing all this, he did not decide to sacrifice his feelings and give back her promise to Mimotchka, asking her to consider herself perfectly free from that moment, and wishing her every happiness. In conclusion, he added that he was leaving Petersburg that day for N——, from where he would not fail to send the furniture and other things belonging to Mimotchka that had been already sent to furnish the little nest by her affectionate relations. There was a

P.S., in which it was mentioned that if mamma would like to sell the furniture, and if she would agree to let it go for . . . (a modest figure was stated), then the *fiancé* would like to buy it, and would not fail to send the money.

Mamma, panting with excitement, and beside herself with vexation, read this letter to her sisters. The aunts comforted and quieted her.

"Well, perhaps it's for the best," said Aunt Sophy; "speaking openly, I never cared for him. I always felt that no good would come out of that connection."

"No, don't let us be partial," remarked Aunt Mary, "he has qualities. . . . Only, as a man that has been a good deal spoilt, he is perhaps a little selfish. . . . Yes, and wants to make a good career too. . . . That was evident from the very beginning. I must acknowledge that, when I heard that my late brother-in-law was asked to exert himself about getting that appointment, I said to my husband, "You may say what you like, but, il y a du louche."

"Well, let him go, and Heaven bless him!" concluded Aunt Julia. "There are as good fish in the sea as ever came out. Mimotchka can make a much better match. It's a good thing that he has left Petersburg. At any rate it will all be done with and forgotten. It's no use despairing. Believe me, everything is for the best."

And perhaps really it is all for the best. Thank Heaven, Mimotchka is once more engaged, once more receiving congratulations. . . . This time not only the day, but also the "hour" of the marriage is fixed, and that hour is so near that Aunt Julia's carriage and black horses are waiting at the door to take Mimotchka to the fashionable church where the guests are assembling.

And Mimotchka herself is sitting before her toilet-table in her pink, young girl's room, and looks in the glass, watching the movements of the *coiffeur* Gustave arranging her pretty hair.

On the bed, with its folded-back pink curtains, lies the white dress, the tulle veil, and the wreath of orange blossoms.

II

When Mimotchka was four years old she had not any idea either of "The little shooter," or "The canary bird,"[1] but she could sing "Il était une bergèr" . . . and "Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre." At seven she could already lisp and chatter very prettily in French. Mdlle.

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[1] Russian nursery rhymes.

Victoire, her nurse, had, up to that time, taught her the French alphabet and a few little songs. Then she was given Perrault's and Berken's fairy tales, which acquainted her with the histories of Bluebeard, Puss-in-Boots, and Peau D'Ane.

And what a cherub Mimotchka was, with her sweet little face, her flaxen hair, her plump, bare arms and shoulders, dressed like a doll in a white frock with a broad sash! It was impossible not to admire her, and not to tell her that she was a most charming child. And Mimotchka liked to be told so, cast down her eyes, made a pretty curtsy, and was already coquettish.

When she grew older and had mastered all the four *conjugaisons*, she was half reluctantly taught to read and write Russian, German, and English, and she had masters for dancing, caligraphy, and drawing. Music was also tried, first the piano, then the harp, and then the violin. . . . But nohow could the instrument, method, and teacher predestinated by Providence to make a musician of Mimotchka be found, and after three years these musical exercises were entirely given up, as it seemed that Mimotchka's health was too delicate to stand them.

In conclusion, to crown Mimotchka's education, she was placed for two years either in Mdlle. Dudu's or Mdlle. Dodo's *pension,* or in the Institution, or else she was sent to France to a convent. I don't exactly remember what was done with our Mimotchka, but I remember that mamma either would not or could not limit herself to "home education," but placed her daughter in some fashionable finishing establishment.

Having finished or half finished her

course of study (in most cases Mimotchka did not finish the course on account of the delicacy of her health or on account of unforeseen circumstances), Mimotchka returned home, a grown-up young lady, and wore long dresses. She was pretty, graceful, and feminine. She could speak and read French; could even write in that language freely enough to compose an invitation to tea or a letter to her dressmaker. She had learnt something besides at her school, but as that "something" was unnecessary, unimportant, and uninteresting, she promptly forgot it.

But I would ask you, reader, your hand on your heart, is it necessary for a pretty woman to have any other knowledge besides the knowledge of the French language? Do her wants, her joys, and her actions show the indispensability of any other knowledge? Does Mimotchka want to be dressed, shod, have her hair done; does she wish to furnish and arrange her rooms, to have her table nicely served—the knowledge of the French language will facilitate her explanations with the French *modiste*, *coiffeur*, and upholsterer, who are all ready, not only to fulfil her orders, but, in case of need, to give her ideas and good advice. . . . Does Mimotchka want to entertain her guests, in what other language, pray, can she converse so prettily and unaffectedly of the weather, the races, and the opera? . . . Does Mimotchka wish to read light, agreeable reading that does not take her away from the beautiful world of balls and ribbons, does not wrinkle up her forehead, does not excite her thoughts and her heart—reading light as the vaporous flounces on the skirt of her ball-dress —French literature gives her clean little volumes, perhaps of not entirely clean contents, but nicely printed on good paper, and with such interesting characters!

You think, perhaps, that Mimotchka had studied but little and that poorly, that she did not care anything at all about books? On the contrary, she was "awfully" fond of reading. After toilettes and going out there was nothing in the world she liked so much as *chocolat mignon* and French novels.

Don't think either that because Mimotchka was so fond of French novels she was unpatriotic, or that she had forgotten the Russian alphabet. Not at all. She would have been glad to read Russian, but there was really nothing to read! If a careful mother wished to give her daughter a Russian book to read, what could you recommend her besides

Fillipoff's or Galakhoff's selections from the best authors, which, of course, cannot be expected to satisfy the imagination of a girl at an age when she naturally dreams of love and of marriage. . . .

Mamma once raised this question at her sisters', and the aunts only confirmed her own opinion, that in Russian there was absolutely nothing whatever to read.

Aunt Sophy declared that she had subscribed to the *World of Fashion*, and was sorry that she had done so, because it could not be compared to French publications of that kind. Aunt Mary took in *Records of the Fatherland*, and said that the contributors to that magazine used such vulgar expressions that she was really obliged to have a dictionary by her when reading.

"I was told," said she, "over and over

again of a certain Stchedrin. . . . And my husband read his books and went into such ecstasies. . . . And so one day I tried to read them—I understood nothing! Really, literally nothing! . . . Such coarseness, all about peasants and their shirts. . . . And so I told my husband. 'Well,' I said, 'I don't know, either I am too stupid, or goodness knows what it all means!'"

Aunt Julia read the *Russian Messenger*, and although she owned that there were some good novels published in that magazine, yet, all the same, she would not advise their being given to Mimotchka to read, because latterly there was hardly a novel without Socialists being introduced into it. . . . And what might not an acquaintance with Socialists lead to? . . . And the aunts decided that there was no reason for Mimotchka to read Russian while there were so many nice French books.

But still people say there are good writers in Russia. Yes, of course there are. Only, all the same, which of them would you give Mimotchka to read? Perhaps *On the Brink*, by Gontcharoff; *On the Eve*, of Tourgueneff; *In the Storm*, by Ostroffsky; Tolstoy's *Anna Karénina;* or Dostoieffsky's *Brothers Karamsine?* Yes, but had you seen Mimotchka, seen that innocent, feminine creature, looking as if she had flown half out of a cloud, half out of a fashion plate! No, better for Mimotchka to read Octave Feuillet, with his limpidly pure style, his poetical heroes and heroines, writhing convulsively in an unnatural struggle between their unnatural passions and their imaginary duty. If she tires of Octave Feuillet she will find other matter in French literature.

Let her read Ponson-du-Terrail. Fairy tales, you say. Perhaps, but still fairy tales are interesting and exciting. . . .

So, gaily, from ball to ball, going out to try on new dresses or buy new gloves, resting on the soft, narrow little bed in the pretty pink room, with its porcelain figures, caskets, bouquets, and *bonbonnières*, eating *chocolat mignon* or *chocolat praliné*, and reading Ponson-du-Terrail! It was amusing, in imagination, to trip through the gas-lit streets of Paris, to drive round the lake or the cascade of the Bois de Boulogne, to listen to the uninterrupted sound of the pistol shots in the duels, to follow out the vicissitudes of love—love criminal, but beautiful and always well dressed—to defeat the machinations of the evildoers, and finally to unite the lovers. . . .

Amusing, too, with a fainting, but fastbeating heart and lightly raised skirt, to run through the dark, unknown ways of Paris, to penetrate into the boudoirs of brilliant cocottes, to rest on their soft velvet or satin couches, to take baths of milk, to bathe in champagne, to adorn one's self with lace and diamonds, to feast, to squander money, to fall in love sentimentally with some handsome but poorly dressed young fellow, an illegitimate son, turning out in the end to be a viscount, a marquis, or even a prince, and of course a millionaire. They may be all fairy tales, but at any rate not dull ones, like those about "Annoushka" and "Lubinka."

And Mimotchka, amidst toilettes and visits, devours this sort of light literature, and it imperceptibly poisons her mind. At that wonderful time when a poet would have likened her awakening heart to a bud ready to open, her soul was filled with the image of Henri, Armand, or Maurice. Such a hero as Maurice neither eats nor drinks, nor is subject to any unpoetical weakness or maladies. The only thing that the author allows him from time to time is a slight scratch (the result of one of the innumerable duels), in consequence of which Maurice appears before the readers with his arm in a sling and an interesting pallor on his countenance. The author does not allow him either any fixed occupation or business, so that the whole time of the fascinating hero is devoted to love and ladies. Of course he is endowed with every imaginable quality and all possible talents; he rides, swims, and shoots admirably, makes every woman he meets fall in love with him, eclipses every man in nobleness and bravery, scatters purses filled with gold all around him, and comes into one inheritance after another. The image of Maurice, his sayings, manners, and doings, are imprinted on Mimotchka's heart, and, like that hero's other victims, she is deeply in love with him.

III

And so, having finished, or half finished, her studies, Mimotchka returns home a grown-up young lady, and wears long dresses.

Life meets her with a smile of welcome. Mimotchka begins to "go out." She dances and amuses herself. . . . Balls are succeeded by theatres, theatres by concerts, picnics, and assaults-at-arms. . . . In the intervals reading, *chocolat mignon*, and dreams of Maurice.

Meanwhile mamma, having passed

through the hard school of life, and knowing that her daughter will not eternally remain a butterfly, fluttering over the fields, is already occupied with the question of how to settle Mimotchka advantageously in life. Mamma dreams of finding a husband for Mimotchka, rich, in society, and in the Government service, with a title, if possible, and of good family. Mimotchka must make a brilliant marriage. All her education had been conducted with that object. Otherwise what would have been the use of paying extravagant sums to dancing and writing masters, what would have been the use of taking the girl abroad and of sending her to Mdlle. Dudu's classes? Only think what it had all cost! Yes, Mimotchka's parents could indeed say that they had spared no expense for the education and instruction of their only daughter.

Mimotchka knows all the best shops in Petersburg; perhaps even she knows the best shops in Paris, London, and Vienna besides; she knows how to spend money, knows how to dress, and how to behave in society. Now a husband must be found for her who can give her full opportunity of displaying her acquirements in all their splendour, who can surround her with becoming surroundings, and be worthy of receiving from mamma's hands that hothouse flower and plant it in the soil of married life.

Mimotchka expects it herself. She still dreams of love and of Maurice, but, all the same, she knows that the chief thing is—money: that without a carriage, without becoming surroundings, and without toilettes, she would not care about love.

Mimotchka knows that she is *une demoiselle à marier*, but she also knows that she is still young, that she is quite a "child," and as she is "a child" she waltzes, smiles, and plays with her fan and her innocent eyes.

. . . How artful young men are nowadays! How difficult it is to bring them to the point! Oh, if only Maurice had been amongst them, he would have prized Mimotchka; he would have chosen her without looking into poor papa's purse. But only try and find such a young man!

And meanwhile time flies. . . . The poor girl is already obliged to take quinine and iron. These intoxicating balls, these sleepless nights—all this tires her out.

And so, reader, imagine the moment when Mimotchka, her first freshness past, begins to get thin and lose her beauty; the doctor, a friend of the family, who is tired of prescribing arsenic, iron, and pepsine gratis, orders the young lady to some foreign watering-place; there is no money to be got anywhere; the dressmakers refuse to make even the simplest travelling dress on credit. . . . Then imagnie how it would be if, at such a moment, unpleasant in itself, some catastrophe were to happen: supposing one of the parents were to fall dangerously ill, or the father be dismissed in disgrace from the service in consequence of the discovery of some unlawful transactions; or supposing he were to die, leaving his family a small pension and unpaid debts. . . . It matters little what it is exactly that happens. . . . But there is nothing to guarantee that such things will not happen.

In our Mimotchka's life the catastrophe was her poor papa's death. He died, leaving his wife a pension and debts, the sum of which had latterly considerably increased on account of the expenses of the trousseau. Mamma simply did not know what to do with the creditors, who seemed to creep out of every crevice. The faithless *fiancé* had broken off the marriage, and, having bought Mimotchka's furniture for a mere song, had relapsed into complete silence. Indirectly, a little later on, mamma heard a rumour that he was going to marry the daughter of the Governor of N——.

The position of the poor women was in all respects terrible. There was literally not a copeck in the house. Mamma tore her hair and anathematised the faithless, good-for-nothing bridegroom. The aunts comforted and condoled with her, but among themselves they could not help rather blaming poor mamma.

" Of course Annette's position is awful," said Aunt Mary, " but one can't but say that she herself is to blame. What was the use of ordering such a trousseau when they were already so badly off? There is nothing to eat in the house, and Mimotchka has linen like a princess! And into whose eyes did they expect to throw dust by it?"

" Yes, of course, they themselves are to blame," agreed Aunt Sophy, " but, all the same, I am sorry for poor Mimotchka. She has been so spoilt; and who knows what yet awaits her in the future! It may end by her having to go out as a governess."

" I gave them a hundred roubles to-day," said Aunt Julia, in conclusion, " but I can't give every day. If I were only to count up all I have already given . . ."

Mimotchka's personal wants were but little affected; as before, she had everything necessary for her toilet, her silk stockings, her chocolate and French novels. But the irritatingly dejected aspect of mamma, her tearful explanations with the aunts, the scenes with the sharp French *fournisseurs,* demanding more and more money, could not fail to make a disagreeable impression on the young girl.

And Mimotchka was sulky and capricious. She refused to take her iron because she had been told it spoiled the teeth, and purposely refused to eat the underdone rump-steak ordered for her, purposely ate nothing but *chocolat praliné.* She gave up reading novels, gave up doing crochet, gave up washing and combing her dog and teasing it—in a word, she threw aside all her usual occupations and—sulked. Now Mimotchka lay on the sofa for whole days together, her arms supporting her head, or stood looking aimlessly out of the window. On account of her mourning she did not go out. She was so dull! Mimotchka was sorry that her marriage had been broken off. Not that she had particularly cared for her *fiancé*, oh no! She had liked many of her other dancers a great deal better. . . . And besides, she had been told that he was "a good-for-nothing fellow," which she could not but repeat because she was accustomed to believe her mamma and aunts in everything. But, good-for-nothing fellow or not, she was sorry that she was not married. If you only knew how sick she was of all these reproaches, questions, and condolences! . . . Sick of all her girlish pink and white frocks, of her little gold cross and the string of pearls round her neck. . . . How near had been the married woman's little caps, diamonds, and velvet dresses, and the freedom from mamma's guardianship, and how suddenly it had all flown away, all fallen into ruins!

Mimotchka sulked, was capricious, and longed for some change, some way out of her present position. Mamma also longed for some way out of their difficulties, and spent her nights in prayers, tears, and dreams, either of a fresh bridegroom appearing as a deliverer, or of an unexpected inheritance, or of winning the great lottery prize of two hundred thousand roubles.

IV

What way out could Mimotchka herself hope for? And what could be expected to happen in the life of a poor girl of nineteen? Don't be vexed with me, Mimotchka, for the expression "a poor girl." I know that such an expression does not sound well, reminding one, perhaps, of a governess or a telegraph girl. . . . And such an appellation is ill suited to an elegant young lady in a jacket from Brissac and a hat from Bertrand. But appearances are deceitful. . . . And I hope that Mimotchka herself will not contradict me when I say that she is—a portionless young person, *qui n'a pas le sou.*

So what can be expected to happen in the life of a poor girl of nineteen? To marry a young man, as poor as herself, let us say, but honest, energetic, and loving, worthy of all love and respect, but possessing neither houses, nor lands, nor shares, nor bonds, nor having any other sources of income besides his work. . . . To love such a man, to become his wife, friend, and helpmate, to lay her pretty head on his shoulder, to rest her soft little hand trustingly on his strong arm, and walk with him through life's way, brightening and cheering that way for him by her love and caresses? . . . To bring into the worker's modest abode her beauty, her youth, and grace, to forget herself in her care for her beloved, and in her turn to become the object of another's thoughts and care and the crown of another's life? . . .

But, allow me. . . . You say that he has not any other sources of income besides his own personal work. Let us suppose that your young man works very hard—let us suppose even hard enough for Mimotchka not to have to dress like a poor creature in an old-fashioned gown. But if he were to die—in what position would she be left? If he were an elderly man, he might, at least, leave her a pension; but a young man, say, what can he leave her? Children, most likely. . . . What is to become of her with these unfortunate children, who inherit neither houses nor lands, who inherit nothing but work? I agree that work is in itself a capital, by the interest of which Mimotchka can profit as long as it is in her husband's hands, but if her husband were to die and the capital pass into Mimotchka's own hands, I doubt if she would be satisfied with such an inheritance.

Don't think, however, that Mimotchka was exceptionally idle, greedy, and heartless. Perhaps she would have been glad to love and sacrifice luxury to the man she loved. Had she not dreamt of Maurice? But she could only make such a sacrifice in the event of meeting with a young man—well, say a young man like "*le* *jeune homme pauvre*" of Octave Feuillet. Do you remember how the poor young fellow almost dies of hunger and gnaws the buds and leaves of the trees in the Tuileries gardens, after having spent his last money in buying expensive soap, bonbons, and prints for his sister? How touching! What woman's heart would not prize such generosity, such delicacy! And how charming are the young man's elegant manners, his tact and behaviour in the modest social position he occupies. So that you feel all the while that he is really only masquerading *en jeune homme pauvre*, and when the right moment comes he throws off the wooden shoes and straw hat of the poor steward and shows himself incomparably richer than his bride.

Perhaps Mimotchka would have fallen in love with such a young man as that? Not for one moment! But you must allow that it is not so easy to fall in love with a young Russian, who does not come into any inheritance, does not speak French, or, if he does, with a bad accent, and who thinks a woman ought to study seriously and work, who earns his daily bread by giving lessons or doing literary work, or perhaps as a clerk in an office, or else serves on the railway in the capacity of something like a stoker (because it appears that such young men really do exist!). You must allow that, if a girl gives up the idea of a carriage and nice rooms, gives up society and going out, gives up Brissac and Bertrand, and fine under-linen, perhaps even gives up *chocolat mignon* and French novels, then the young man to whom all this is sacrificed must at least be worthy of her and deserve her. But our poor young men are so common, so rough, and *d'un terre à terre!* And such being the case, what can you find attractive in them ?

In short, Mimotchka, any one poor is unsuited to you. Yes, and mamma would never allow you to "bring beggars into the world," as she expresses it. . . . And mamma has experience and knows what she says. She knows what it is to live on small means !

Another prospect : to give up all hope of marrying and to reconcile herself to the idea of becoming a useless old maid. (That pretty Mimotchka, who already at seven years old knew what suited her and cried if they tied her hair with a ribbon she didn't like !)

But supposing that she gives up the idea of marrying. How is she to live in that case ? how exist if, which God forbid, her mamma were to die (and she certainly will die some day) and there would be nobody left to look after Mimotchka's toilettes and her meals, nobody to sell and pawn things, to send away creditors, to borrow and tearfully squeeze money out of relations and friends? Mimotchka is such a child. She would be lost by herself. . . . Live by her work? earn her own living? become a lady-doctor, clerk, or book-keeper? . . . But Mimotchka has been educated with quite different ideas! . . .

As for medicine, we had better not mention it at all. At the mere thought, the mere recollection of Mimotchka's innocent-looking, downcast eyes, I could not bring myself to suggest such an improper occupation to her as the study of anatomy. And her nerves! . . . Do you know, Mimotchka is such a little coward that, every night before going to sleep, she takes a lighted candle and looks under the bed, the armchairs, and tables, so as to make quite sure that there is no Rocambole, Jack Sheppard, or dreadful beggar hidden there. She even looks in the ventilators of the stove. . . . She is so afraid, so afraid of everything! How could you ever accustom her to the sight of suffering, of blood, and of death?

It is equally absurd to imagine Mimotchka a clerk, for instance, in the office of a railway company, to imagine her in a room furnished with tables and desks at which are seated dreadful, unknown men. Of course they would all admire her, and all fall in love with her. But in general, for her to have to sit in the same room with men from ten in the morning till five in the evening. . . . Say what you like, it's not proper! Don't think, however, that Mimotchka had never sat in the same room with men. She had even been held in their arms to the enchanting strains of fashionable waltzes played by Rosenberg or Schmidt. To tell you the truth (and quite in confidence), a certain young guardsman had kissed her more than once in convenient corners both before and after the "proposal." But in the first place she had never told anybody about it except her particular friend Mdlle. X. and Douniasha, her maid, so that neither mamma nor anyone else had any suspicion of it; and, secondly, he really was her *fiancé*. Of course, if all Mimotchka's *valseurs* had kissed her, I do not say but that it would have been wrong, very wrong; but, anyhow, it seems to me that it would have been less improper than her sitting all day in some office. All these *valseurs*, at any rate, were young men of her own class, introduced into society by her acquaintances, but who knows what sort of people there are in offices? Jews, perhaps, or tradespeople. . . . And who can be sure that some of them might not kiss Mimotchka? She is still such a child! . . .

Perhaps Mimotchka might give lessons, *courir le cachet?* But lessons in what—French? She has read Ponson-du-Terrail and Co., read both Belot and Malot, read Octave Feuillet, but of grammar she has only the most confused ideas, and a knowledge of grammar is required in a teacher. And then to give lessons—that again means going about the streets alone and risking to be taken for Heaven knows what. . . . Poor Mimotchka is so pretty and feminine that, if she has not a proper companion with her and a footman walking behind her, she might be taken for goodness knows what!

Mimotchka neither knows how to sew

nor cut out; she has never been taught to; and anyhow she could not become a dressmaker! She only knows how to cut out lamp-shades and do crochet. But then doing crochet does not bring in much.

In fact, all this talk of woman's work and woman's independence shows itself to be pure nonsense. And why argue about it when woman's calling and duties are plainly shown to her both by God and nature. She is to be a wife and a mother, the companion of man, from whose rib she was created for that purpose. Therefore, Mimotchka, wait, look out and secure a bridegroom—of course one that can be depended upon, and who has means. There is the third prospect for you, the third (and, it would seem, the only possible) way out for you from your present position.

There are some husbands predestinated by Fate itself for girls like Mimotchka, for girls who are poor, but have been spoilt, brought up in luxury, and are unaccustomed to privations. There are two classes of such husbands—either rich old bachelors, who have wasted their strength, health, intellect, and senses in a stormily spent youth, wasted everything except their too easily got money, and have tried every sensation that this money can give them, except that of possessing for their "very own" an innocent young wife, to purchase which, however, it is never too late; or else there are old bachelors in the contrary position to the first, who have begun their life and career in want and privation, timid, calculating, having been obliged to deny themselves everything in youth, and having at last scraped together the desired capital by fair means or foul, and attained the longed-for rank, position, period, and age which will enable them to contract a marriage with a young and pretty girl.

Heaven was not deaf to mamma's prayers, but sent her Spiridon Ivanovitch. Through the aunts and friends the marriage was settled and interviews arranged—of course everything being conducted in the most correct manner.

Spiridon Ivanovitch may be stupid or clever, good or bad; he may be pleasing or unpleasing, ugly or handsome—all these are unimportant details; what is important and beyond a doubt is, that he is a man of substantial means, elderly, capable, and reliable; he is also bald and wrinkled, suffers from a catarrh and rheumatism, and perhaps gout besides. . . .

Is it really possible to marry him? Mamma stands up for Spiridon Ivanovitch.

Mimotchka, believe mamma; she has more experience than you; she knows what life is. But what do you know about it? From novels? . . . "La vie n'est pas un roman," they tell you, and you will soon be convinced yourself that they are right.

And so Mimotchka submits. She gives her consent, coquettishly laughing at Spiridon Ivanovitch and victoriously tapping on the ground with the point of her little shoe, under the heel of which she is determined to keep her future husband.

V

The marriage was arranged in the following manner. Aunt Julia, between visiting, vint,[1] and the opera, somehow heard of Spiridon Ivanovitch and managed to get acquainted with him. When she was quite sure that his estate in the Government of Koursk was not mortgaged, but yielded a good income, and also that Spiridon Ivanovitch himself had not any serious entanglement (if you don't count a dancer, who was no longer very young, to whom he was only attached from habit, and by whom he had four rather pretty children), then Aunt Julia gave mamma to understand that she had something in view suitable for Mimotchka.

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[1] Vint, a game at cards in the style of whist, but much more complicated, and played a great deal in Russia.

Mamma went at once to the monastery of St. Sergius and had a Te Deum sung.

Soon afterwards Aunt Julia sent out invitations to her friends for a dance. Mamma was told beforehand that Spiridon Ivanovitch would be there. Mimotchka had a charming *toilette crême* made for her, which was worthy of being described in the pages of some "chronique de l'élégance." The toilette was very successful, and was much appreciated by all those present at the party. It was the first time Mimotchka had been out anywhere that winter; her mourning was only just over. The talk about her unexpectedly broken-off marriage and the mean way in which her *fiancé* had behaved was unceasing, and went from mouth to mouth with additions and embellishments. In consequence of this, or perhaps simply because Mimotchka was particularly well dressed that evening, she anyhow attracted more attention than usual. She was universally admired and complimented. She danced more than any of the others, was unusually animated, and really was the queen of the evening.

Resting on a seat, giddy from the last *tour de valse*, slightly out of breath and blushing a tender carnation, she felt approving glances directed at her from all sides, and the knowledge of her success made her look even prettier.

Spiridon Ivanovitch had been playing at cards; but before supper he came towards the dancing-room and stood at the door watching the dancers. He admired Mimotchka very much. That evening he was in luck and in good spirits. With the freedom of an old bachelor he loudly and openly praised the grace and loveliness of this charming doll, and even said that if he could only throw off some fifteen years from his shoulders he would make her an offer at once.

Mamma, who had been watching over Spiridon Ivanovitch the whole evening, caught these unguarded words, and her heart beat with a joyful hope.

During the mazourka,[1] Mimotchka, by

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[1] The mazourka has figures, like a cotillion.

Aunt Julia's advice, chose Spiridon Ivanovitch, who was still standing at the door, and crossed the room with him amidst general enthusiasm. Every one smiled as they looked at them: either at pretty Mimotchka's fancy in choosing such an old and unattractive partner, or at Spiridon Ivanovitch's venturing to dance at his age, with his rank and with his asthma, and without knowing how, or finally because Aunt Julia's guests had guessed her intentions and greeted the couple as future bride and bridegroom—be this as it may, anyhow everyone smiled and rejoiced as they looked at them. The stout Spiridon Ivanovitch, perspiring and puffing like a steam-engine, smiled himself, and the ethereal Mimotchka also smiled.

At supper they were seated side by side. The amiable Spiridon Ivanovitch, having frankly and rather nervously warned Aunt Julia that he was quite unaccustomed to the society of "respectable" women, and especially of innocent young girls, sat by Mimotchka's side and continued to gaze admiringly at her, playfully and most respectfully paid his addresses to her, was in fact quite taken up with her, and almost talked baby language so as to fall into the right tone and make himself understood.

Excited by the dancing and the champagne she had drunk, besides being very flattered by the attentions and admiration of this ridiculous stout man with the fringed epaulets,[1] Mimotchka became quite lively, flushed, and talked a great deal more than usual.

She told Spiridon Ivanovitch that she loved dancing, and that she had passed a very dull winter last year, because she had not gone out on account of her mourning for her papa; so that now she did so enjoy dancing again! . . . Then Mimotchka told him that she also loved little dogs, and that she had had such a darling of a dog, such a tiny, tiny little thing; its name was "Fanfreluche," and it had died! Mimotchka had cried a whole week. It had been the greatest sorrow of her life. She did so love that dog! And now Aunt Mary had given her another dog. It was a little larger, but also a darling, and she called it "Turlurette." . . . And it could already stand on its hind legs! . . .

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[1] Only Russian officers of staff rank wear fringed epaulets

Spiridon Ivanovitch proposed the health of "Turlurette." . . . Mimotchka laughed, coquetted, drank her champagne, clinking glasses with Spiridon Ivanovitch, and, her bright eyes sparkling, openly declared that she had never, never enjoyed herself so much !

And mamma looked at them from the other end of the table and was quite touched.

The next morning mamma, all in a flutter, came to see Aunt Julia and talk things over. They talked of the estates in the Government of Koursk, of the dancer and her children, and of Spiridon Ivanovitch's behaviour of the previous evening. It was decided to make a serious attack on him. Aunt Julia generously promised to help, and she managed the affair so cleverly that in some two or three weeks' time the unfortunate Spiridon Ivanovitch was caught and bound, and it only remained for him to fix the day of the wedding.

Mamma was beside herself with joy.

At first she had perhaps hoped for something more brilliant; but now, in their terrible, hopeless position, after all the trouble and unpleasantness with the first *fiancé*, Spiridon Ivanovitch appeared to her a treasure such as she had hardly hoped to find. Yes, and looking at it seriously, what more could you desire in a *fiancé?* He was a general, rich, and seemed to be a kind man besides. . . . There was the dancer and her children! Well, but it was really impossible for everything to be so entirely free from annoyance and irritation. As long as he did not ruin himself over that family, Mimotchka had really nothing to do with the matter and need not pay any attention to it.

Both mamma and Mimotchka quite wore themselves out over the trousseau. The bridegroom hurried on the wedding, and it was impossible to keep so highly respected a man waiting as if he were a mere boy! Besides, mamma had had too much worry with the first *fiancé* not to wish to strike while the iron was hot.

The chief things in the trousseau—the linen, furs, and silver—were already there. The princess's coronet only had to be taken off. But some of the dresses had to be altered, and some new ones made besides. In the sixteen months' interval between the two *fiancés* fashion had made rapid strides. The aunts and uncles consulted together and made Mimotchka fresh presents. And Spiridon Ivanovitch was no niggard in his presents either. Everything went on swimmingly. Mamma exulted. Mimotchka took the arsenic prescribed for her, drank pyro-phosphorous iron water, tried on her new dresses, received congratulations, opened jewel cases and boxes from the leading Petersburg jewellers, and was delighted with the diamonds, sapphires, and emeralds that were sent to her by Spiridon Ivanovitch.

Everybody rejoiced; everybody congratulated her heartily, sincerely, and truly—wished her everything good, and repeated in chorus, "Thank God, thank God!"

VI

And so not only the day, but the hour of the wedding is fixed. . . .

Mimotchka's *coiffure* is finished. Gustave is sent out of the room while Mimotchka puts on her wedding dress, with its garlands and bouquets of orange blossoms and its long train of thick white *faille* lined with Lyons satin, a wonderful dress ordered from Mdme. Lesserteur.

Mimotchka surveys herself rather anxiously in the looking-glass. The bodice fits exquisitely.

It only remains to pin on the veil and wreath, Monsieur Gustave's services are again in requisition. He has to be hurried. It appears that the best man has already arrived. Yes, yes; he really has come. . . . The bridegroom is already in the church. . . . It's time!

Directly, directly, Mimotchka will be ready directly. I look at her and involuntarily some emotion takes possession of me, involuntarily my thoughts run on, and I see the lit-up church, where the crowd of festively attired relations and friends are chatting and looking about them while they wait for the bride. I see the stout Spiridon Ivanovitch, resplendent with orders, his bald head shining, and wearing a new pair of fringed epaulets.

Now there is a movement in the crowd, the talk ceases, all the heads are turned round. From the choir come the strains of a solemn chant, and Mimotchka appears at the threshold of the church. Uncle Theodore, wearing the ribbon of the White Eagle,[1] gives her his arm and leads her up along the soft carpet. How pretty she is! I vow that the orange blossoms and cloud of white tulle never adorned a lovelier and more charming head.

> "Approach, approach, thou pure dove." . . .[2]

But do you know what you are going to, poor dove? Think, Mimotchka; won't you stop before it is too late? . . .

Why? . . . And what is the good of thinking about it? Every one does it. Some time or other the step must be taken. It seems it must. And how can one escape from it? . . .

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[1] One of the highest Russian orders.

[2] The opening words of the hymn sung in the marriage service when the bride enters the church.

But you're pale, Mimotchka; you lower your eyelashes, and the wax taper trembles in your little hand. . . . Are you afraid? Are you ashamed?

No; only nervous and ill at ease. . . . In the church it seems cold. . . . Or does the bodice press? . . . Something feels strange, unpleasant. . . . And then how every one stares! . . .

But my thoughts are wandering. Mimotchka is not yet even in the church. She is still in her room, standing before the large mirror; she cannot tear herself away from the contemplation of herself in her new dress.

Her toilet is finished. The veil and wreath are unusually becoming to the bride, and so everyone tells her; but

Mimotchka no longer smiles her usual, unchanging smile. She is a little agitated. On her cheek there is a pink spot, her hand slightly trembles as she draws on her glove. Why does she feel so cold ?

All those around her are agitated too. The maid Douniasha makes faces as she gulps down her tears. Lulushka or Turlurette yelps and barks, offended because she is turned off Mimotchka's train. They all surround the bride, looking at her from all sides, arranging her dress, her veil, giving her her gloves, scent. . . .

It's time, Mimotchka, time ! Go into the drawing-room now for your mother to bless you before you leave. The bridegroom is already in church. . . . Make haste ; they are waiting for you. . . .

Look round for the last time on your young girl's room, look at your pretty pink room, in which you ate *chocolat* *mignon* and read French novels, and bid farewell to it! You will never come back here. What awaits you in the new life?

Mamma blesses Mimotchka, and sheds a few tears as she embraces and kisses her pale daughter. "You don't feel unwell, Mimi?"

"No, no, not at all. . . ."

Mimotchka goes down the stairs. At the entrance on the pavement there already stands a group of curious, gaping spectators: the weeping housemaid Douniasha, the cook, the neighbour's servants, and some outsiders. . . .

Aunt Julia, the little boy who is to carry the icon,[1] and the bride take their places in the carriage. The footman slams the door and jumps up on the box.

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[1] A little boy, generally a relative or the child of an intimate friend, carries an icon in the bridal procession.

The carriage fast disappears down the street.

Good-bye, Mimotchka, be happy!

You perhaps expected, Mimotchka, that I should follow you to the church, and further and further. . . . No, there are spectators enough at your wedding without me. Only look at that motley collection of people, whom the police are allowing to crowd on to the broad pavement of the Liteynaia, the whole length of the long line of carriages. Look at the seamstresses, housemaids, gossiping women, young and old, gazing open-mouthed as they go on their way, with bundles or bandboxes in their hands; they have not strength to resist the temptation of stopping to admire your uncle's orders and epaulets, your aunts' light, elegant toilettes, and above all they long to catch a glimpse of you, Mimotchka—you, the chief person in all this pageant.

They are waiting for you. . . . Do you see how they stand on tiptoe, how they crane their necks at your approach? Perhaps they have heard about you; perhaps one of those old gossips is even now giving the rest the most trustworthy or untrustworthy information about you; perhaps, looking at you, they exchange pitying remarks of the kind of those overheard and caught up from them by the great author of *Anna Karénina.*

"Isn't she a sweet pretty bride, decked out like a lamb for the sacrifice! But, say what you like, we women are sorry for our sister!"

MIMOTCHKA AT THE SPRINGS

MIMOTCHKA AT THE SPRINGS

Mimotchka is getting thin, Mimotchka looks pale, Mimotchka is dull. . . .

Mamma is anxious and fusses; Spiridon Ivanovitch grunts and frowns; baby is tiresome and roars. . . .

Such, in its general features, is Mimotchka's life—and yet it had seemed to begin so well!

Directly after the wedding the young couple went abroad. The doctor had long advised Spiridon Ivanovitch to take a course of waters, and even before meeting his bride he had intended to pass the summer abroad. His unexpected marriage had not changed previous plans, and, having obtained three months' leave, Spiridon Ivanovitch started with his young wife for Vichy.

They travelled with every possible comfort, and Spiridon Ivanovitch was so careful and attentive during the journey, that Mimotchka was obliged to own that it was much nicer and pleasanter travelling with him than with mamma. However, in spite of it all, on their arrival in Paris she was so tired out, and above all so enervated, so enervated, that she cried the whole day long, and even thought she would like to kill herself, because it seemed to her that she cared for nothing in life. Paris was so dark, so gloomy, horrible, and disgusting. . . . The sun never shone, and the rain poured and poured. . . . And she cried and cried. . . . The tears certainly rather troubled Spiridon Ivanovitch, but after all what could he do? . . . The rain—what rain it was to be sure! But it was God's will. . . . And he only drummed on the table with his fingers and swore at the servants.

But when the young people arrived at Vichy, where the comfortable rooms, that had been ordered beforehand and had a balcony overlooking the crowded boulevard, were awaiting them, when they had dined both savourily and satisfactorily in these bright, cheerful rooms, and when, above all, they had unpacked their trunks and bags, then again everything looked nice and bright. Mimotchka saw that, in spite of everything, life was still endurable and might even be very pleasant. She wiped away her tears and occupied herself in hanging up her new dresses.

Then they sent for a doctor. And there came a dark-eyed young Frenchman, good-looking and chatty. And how he spoke French—gracious heavens, how he spoke!

What a doctor! Everyone, everyone all round, beginning with the grey-haired landlady, and ending with Joseph, the *concierge's* fourteen-year-old son, every one was so amiable, elegant, attentive, and lively. . . . It seemed to Mimotchka as if she had come to her native land. The chemist, to whom the young people went, directly after their arrival, for some rhubarb and magnesia, was as like as two peas to the *jeune premier* of the Théâtre Michel, so that Mimotchka quite blushed when Spiridon Ivanovitch, having got his magnesia, began to inquire of the young man about some further remedies. . . . And the postman was very like the well-known *coiffeur* from the Bolshaia Konushenaia. . . .

Spiridon Ivanovitch set about his cure without delay and with great zeal. He liked being doctored and understood all about it. Not satisfied with the punctilious fulfilment of his own doctor's prescriptions, he secretly consulted other doctors, consulted the invalids with whom he made acquaintance at the baths and springs, consulted the chemist and other tradespeople, bought heaps of medical works, pamphlets, and manuals, bought medicinal wines and medicines advertised in the papers, discovered that he had some fresh malady every day, and expounded the symptoms of his illness to his doctor so significantly and with so many details, that the young Frenchman, while listening to him with profound and polite attention, could not help glancing stealthily and with tender commiseration at pretty pale Mimotchka, and twirling the end of his silky moustaches, said to her in a look, "Poor little thing! and so pretty!" . . .

Spiridon Ivanovitch decided that Mimotchka should make a cure for anæmia and nerves. Mamma had asked him so much about it! So Mimotchka drank the "source Mesdames" and took baths, and walked up and down in the park. But, as her cure was less complicated and serious than Spiridon Ivanovitch's cure, she still had a good deal of spare time, which she employed in watching the people and in looking at her new dresses. And as both these occupations were very congenial to her tastes, she was not dull. The season was one of the most successful and most brilliant. At the waters there was Strauss, there was Patti; there was an English royal personage with his wife; there were American millionaires with their daughters, and lots of cocottes and aristocrats besides. . . . There were no end of stories about and two or three scandals. . . . The weather was lovely and warm, perhaps even too warm. But what walks there were, what riding parties in the evening on the shores of the Allier, what concerts and dances in the evening at the Casino! Of course Mimotchka did not make any acquaintances—society is so mixed at watering-places!—but still, without knowing anyone, it was amusing to look at other people's toilettes and watch others' intrigues. Altogether she was very much amused. And in answer to her cousin Zina and her friends, the three sisters Poltavsteff, who asked her if she was happy, Mimotchka wrote: "So happy, so happy. . . . Jamais je ne me suis tant amusée qu'à Vichy. Figurez-vous . . ." and so on.

Time flew on quickly and imperceptibly. Spiridon Ivanovitch's cure was finished. He had got thinner, but felt brisker and healthier. Mimotchka was blooming, and had grown even prettier in the pure air of the South of France. One month's leave yet remained. Spiridon Ivanovitch asked his wife to decide where they should spend this last month—in Italy, Switzerland, or Paris? . . . Doctor Souly's pamphlet recommends some quiet corner in Switzerland for an after-cure, but Mimotchka preferred Paris. Spiridon Ivanovitch willingly submitted to this decision, and, having liberally paid the landlady, the dark-eyed doctor, and others, the young people packed up their baggage and went back to Paris, where the honeymoon really began. Just at that time Spiridon Ivanovitch received a good round sum from his tenants, and Mimotchka was in a state of perfect bliss, buying right and left everything that took her fancy. Oh, her honeymoon! . . . They stayed at an expensive and very good hotel. In the morning the general got up first and read the Russian and French newspapers while he drank his coffee, but Mimotchka lay in bed a long time after. Then she got up when she liked, and without hurrying began her toilet. Every day she had a new kind of soap, new kinds of scents, toilet waters and pomatums. And what stockings, boots, and garters she bought herself! . . . Oh, her honeymoon! . . .

When she was dressed Mimotchka went in to her husband, who kissed her perfumed hand, and, holding it in his, bent down his bald forehead for her to kiss. They breakfasted off *hors d'œuvre*, lobster, and *côtelettes en papillottes*, and, having thus fortified themselves, they went out walking or driving to see museums or the environs of Paris. . . . Before dinner Spiridon Ivanovitch returned home to have a nap, while Mimotchka went shopping and bought more and more. . . . Then came dinner, and afterwards a theatre, cirque, or café concert. . . . Spiridon Ivanovitch knew Paris well, and was particularly well acquainted with its places of amusement; and, as he held the opinion that abroad a respectable woman might go anywhere, because nobody knew her, he took his wife to both "Mabille" and "Bullier," and to all the Eldorados besides, so as to show her the cocottes of both sides of the Seine.

Having thus spent their honeymoon, the young couple returned to Petersburg with empty purses, with an increased number of trunks and bandboxes, with a store of amusing and agreeable reminiscences, and on much more intimate and friendly terms with each other than when they had started.

All the relations met Mimotchka with open arms. She was no longer a portionless girl, looking out for a husband, whom the aunts could keep in the background and snub if they liked. . . . Now she was the wife of a general commanding a division, the wife of a highly-respected and wealthy man, a lady with fresh toilettes from Paris and a position in society.

Besides her position in society, Mimotchka was before long in what is termed an "interesting position." To tell the truth, this last position was somewhat burdensome to her, and, if mamma and Spiridon Ivanovitch had not watched over her like a goddess, Mimotchka would have made away with herself. But, when all the suffering and misery were over, when the heir of Spiridon Ivanovitch occupied his appointed place in this world of grief and tears, when his screams began to resound through the general's large house, and when Mimotchka was up and well again, then she was glad in her heart and well satisfied. Glad both because she had grown prettier and plumper, and because now she has a real live baby of her own, while her friends, the three sisters Poltavsteff, are still painting on china and singing Italian arias and gipsy songs, in the vain hope of attracting some one who can give them *une position dans le monde* and a real, live baby.

And Mimotchka possesses both the one and the other. And although all the three sisters Poltavsteff, when they come to see Mimotchka and admire the baby, kissing his soft, dimpled little hands and feet, say with one accord that they can only understand marrying for love, and that not one of them would marry except for love; still Mimotchka knows perfectly well that this is only talk, and that, had Spiridon Ivanovitch taken a fancy to one of them instead of her, any of the three would have married him directly. It's no laughing matter. He is in command of a division, and a whole division is under his inspection. And even more awaits him in the future. Spiridon Ivanovitch's career is not nearly finished. . . . It would have been indeed stupid to refuse such a *partie*.

Why then, now, six years after marriage, is Mimotchka dull ? Why does she get thin and pale ? What can she want ? She has her family. She has her son, her husband, and her mother. She has plenty of money, carriages, and a box at the opera. What more can she desire ? Mimotchka herself does not know what she wants. She does not want anything. She is simply tired of life. It is quite immaterial to her whether she lives or dies. Dies ? Oh yes, and even now, directly. So she says, and poor mamma cannot hear it without tears and sighs. She sees that her daughter is really ill, that she is hiding something, and that she gets weaker and more irritable every day. . . . Mamma implores Mimotchka to consult Doctor Variashski (mamma believes in him as she does in the Almighty). But Mimotchka is obstinate and angry, and says, "Ah, laissez donc ! je me porte à merveille ! Je suis tout à fait bien." And mamma sighs and Mimotchka gets paler and thinner.

The aunts are much concerned at the change in Mimotchka's appearance.

"But how plain Mimi is growing," said Aunt Sophy. "And why is she getting so sickly ?"

"She has an old husband," says Aunt Mary shortly.

"Oh, how can you talk like that ?"

says Aunt Julia reproachfully. "And, after all; old, old . . . Enfin elle a un enfant. Qu'est ce qu'elle a à se plaindre ?"

"Annette thinks that she has never been quite strong since her confinement, her confinement and the chloroform, and . . ."

"That's an old story! On the contrary, she improved so much then."

"And I am convinced that she is simply ill from want of something to do," says Aunt Julia severely. "Why, for whole days she doesn't move one finger over another. Look at my Zina; she orders the dinner and pours out the tea, then she attends classes, then she practises her voice. . . . Every minute is occupied. And look what a colour the girl has, how healthy she is. People say, Petersburg, Petersburg. . . . Rubbish! You can be healthy anywhere. But Mimotchka. . . . If I led such a life I should have been dead long ago."

And the aunts are perfectly right. Mimotchka is getting plain, Mimotchka is dull, and Mimotchka does nothing.

Mamma loves her so tenderly that she considers every occupation, even of the slightest and easiest description, to be beyond Mimi's strength and too much for her. All the cares of the housekeeping, all the care of the child, mamma takes upon herself, leaving Mimotchka to drive, dress, go out, and receive. At first these occupations had satisfied Mimotchka, but now they wearied her. Yes, nothing satisfies her now. . . . To quote the words of Schopenhauer—she had lost appetite for life. . . .

And by the side of the apathy taking possession of her there grows an instinctive feeling of irritation against mamma and Spiridon Ivanovitch—a feeling of irritation very near to antipathy. She does not know in what way they interfere with her or of what they deprive her. She only knows that each day they become stranger and more wearisome to her. She feels confusedly that the life they have made for themselves is warm and pleasant to them, while she is entangled in it and struggles like a fly in a spider's web. And she cannot extricate herself from this spider's web because it is woven of the tenderest care for her. If she goes to the theatre, or to an evening party, either mamma or Spiridon Ivanovitch invariably accompanies her, and she cannot say a word, or make a step that is not known to them and commented upon. Mimotchka sees that Spiridon Ivanovitch is simply jealous —of course he is, even the aunts notice it. But he will not own to it, and his distrust is disguised in phrases such as, "That is not usual in society. . . . It will look awkward. . . . People don't do so." So that altogether Mimotchka becomes daily more and more indifferent to life.

Mamma and Spiridon Ivanovitch get on very well together, and soon become fast friends. They understand each other almost without speaking. Spiridon Ivanovitch's reviews, committees, and projects deeply interest mamma, who, even during her late husband's lifetime, had been accustomed to hearing about military matters. Mimotchka considers everything relating to her husband's military service stupid and dull. It seems to her that he talks on purpose before mamma about "Committees, re-or-ga-ni-sa-tion. . . . With bayonets or without bayonets." And mamma actually replies as if it interests her! Besides conversations about the service they have conversations about the education of children, which she also detests. Mimotchka knows that however you may educate children, whatever books you may read, they will scream and soil their pinafores just the same, and then be tiresome and disobedient. And theories are no use at all. You must have a good nurse and be able to pay her good wages. What is the use of saying the same things over and over again ?

But the worst of all, the most unbearable of all, is their conversation about politics. Politics—Mimotchka's *bête noire.* In the newspapers she only reads the last sheet, because only the deaths and advertisements of sales interest her, but mamma and Spiridon Ivanovitch devour the whole paper from A to Z, so that every day at dinner they go over all the articles in it again. All this talk about Bismarck, about the Emperor William, about Italy and Austria, and about that most boring Bulgaria, will certainly drive Mimotchka out of her mind or into her grave! What does she care about the Coburgs or about Battenberg! She is twenty-six; she is at an age to enjoy life, to laugh and amuse herself, and not to sit here between her grey-haired mamma and bald-headed Spiridon Ivanovitch, who sniffs, and coughs, and spits, and pours himself out bitters. And Mimotchka, irritated beyond all bearing by Battenberg, capriciously pushes her plate of cutlets away from her as if they had offended her as well as everything else in the house, and says, "Encore ce Battenberg! Il m'agace à la fin!"

And mamma sighs and Spiridon Ivanovitch frowns.

Well now, for instance, there is her friend, Nettie Poltavsteff, she is married to a young man; perhaps rather a thoughtless young fellow, without any prospects, but how they enjoy themselves! my goodness, how they enjoy themselves! True, they are squandering their capital, and the old Poltavsteffs shake their heads fearfully and disapprovingly. True, that Nettie's admirer takes root more and more firmly in the house, so that many people smile meaningly when they speak of him; true, that Mimotchka herself repeats after mamma and the aunts that Nettie is in a dangerous way; true, that Mimotchka, by Aunt Julia's advice, purposely lets a long period elapse before she returns Nettie's visits, but what of that? anyhow, Nettie amuses herself, Nettie really enjoys life . . . Nettie dresses eccentrically, Nettie goes to see burlesques, goes to masquerades and restaurants, laughs at everything and everybody, and contents herself with men's society. She is a good deal talked about, and not always well spoken of, but she laughs at that too. Her husband tolerates her doings, and so do others. . . . And around Nettie life and gaiety play and sparkle like the champagne that is always on her table.

Formerly she and Mimotchka were great friends, but now mamma and Spiridon Ivanovitch have put a veto on their friendship. They consider Nettie too frivolous, and look on her as a bad example for Mimotchka. And so Mimotchka does not return her visits because, of course, she is in a dangerous way. . . . But, all the same, Mimotchka is very sorry that Nettie is in a dangerous way, because if she were not it would be very amusing to go and see her. . . . She is very nice, Nettie is, and so full of fun. . . . And, even putting Nettie aside, anyhow Mimotchka finds it livelier at the three sisters Poltavsteff's house than at her own home. They sing, dance, play, and build castles in the air. . . . They are always in love with somebody or other, always talking about captains and lieutenants, or about Nettie's admirers. . . . They have dreams, hopes, and plans for the future, everything to look forward to. But she? What can she expect? What can she hope for? Her life is over. She has no illusions left. She knows what life is, knows what men are, what marriage is, what this much-vaunted love is—*une horreur!* And yet Aunt Mary says to her, "Mind you don't fall in love with anyone!" She—fall in love! Why, she does not even care to live. . . . And her best years have gone, irrevocably gone. . . . She is already an old woman. She is twenty-six. Yes, quite an old woman.

. . . She feels so old, so old, so tired of life. . . .

And Mimotchka is dull and gets thin and pale.

By the spring her nervous depression reaches such a pitch that one fine evening, when Spiridon Ivanovitch proposes to the ladies to decide whether they would like to spend the summer in the country on his estates or take a *datcha*[1] elsewhere, Mimotchka goes off into a fit of hysterics, a real fit of hysterics, laughing, crying, and screaming. . . . Mamma is in despair. This is what it has come to! And what had she been thinking of to allow it to go on? . . .

Energetic measures must be immediately taken; yes, immediately. Mimi gives way, she agrees to consult Doctor Variashski. Mamma has such confidence in Variashski! He had attended Mimotchka before, once he had even saved her life, he understands her nature. . . . And such a nice man besides, so attentive and amusing. . . . No mere boy either, but a reliable, respectable man, a professor too. . . . Mamma believes in him as she does in the Almighty. Now they can only look to Doctor Variashski to save Mimotchka. They will do whatever he tells them. If he says, Go to Madeira, they will go to Madeira. . . . Spiridon Ivanovitch is ready to provide the money. It's impossible to stop at any expense when it comes to a question of saving life, and the life of one near and dear to you. They will do whatever Variashski tells them to.

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[1] Villa residences let for the summer season in the environs of St. Petersburg.

"Whom do I see! My humble respects!" says Doctor Variashski, introducing mamma and Mimotchka into his consulting-room and rapidly glancing, through his spectacles, round the reception-room, full of patients of every age and description, whispering in the corners or turning over the leaves of the newspapers as they await their turn.

Mimotchka, on entering the consulting-room, throws herself wearily into a soft armchair near the writing-table, and in a languid voice replies monosyllabically and unwillingly to the doctor's questions, while mamma, turning her anxious gaze from the doctor to her daughter and back again, tries to gather something from the expression of his countenance. And in her terrified and loving imagination she already sees behind her beloved daughter fearful, menacing spectres—consumption, or death from exhaustion. . . . But no, the doctor seems calm, he is even cheerful.

"So you really think, Krondide Feodorovitch, that this dreadful weakness can be conquered?"

"Yes, I think there is no impossibility whatever in it."

"Ah, God grant it, God grant it! . . . But you must know she is not telling you everything. She is so patient, so patient; but of course I can see how she suffers!"

And mamma, in spite of her daughter, begins in an agitated and lugubrious voice to relate to Krondide Feodorovitch in the most detailed manner how Mimotchka gets out of breath going upstairs, how she cries without any cause, how cross she gets with her maid and with baby, how thin she is getting, which is evident from the bodices of her dresses, how yesterday at dinner she only ate half a cutlet, and to-day—and so on and on.

"So," says the doctor, writing out a prescription, "and what do you think of doing this summer?"

"Ah, Krondide Feodorovitch, that is the chief reason why we came to you. We will do whatever you tell us. Wherever you send us. . . . You know that we have both money and time to spare. I had already thought that perhaps sea-bathing . . . abroad . . ."

"Yes, of course; abroad is all very well. But what would you say to the Caucasus? You were never in the Caucasus?"

"No; but I have heard from many people that it is still very primitive there, nothing properly arranged . . . no lodgings nor doctors. . . . They say there are only most awful veterinary surgeons there. . . . And nothing whatever to eat." . . .

"Oh, well, that's all very much exaggerated. And you can always find something to eat if you are not too dainty. And as to doctors, you apparently do me the honour of having some confidence in me ? "

" Oh, Krondide Ivanovitch, you ! I believe in you as I do in God ! . . . All my hope is in you ! "

" Well, then, you see no other doctor will be required. I myself will attend Marie Ilinishna." . . .

" What, you will be there ? Oh, that alters the question. . . . Once you are there. . . . When will you be there ? "

" At the beginning of the season ; you know, where the ladies are, there I am to be found too. And all the ladies go there. Jeleznovodsk is called the ladies' spring."

Mimotchka brightens up a little. She would like to go to the Caucasus. Nettie had spent last summer at Kislovodsk and had come back with very pleasant remembrances of it. There she had completely emancipated herself, and from there she had brought back her present adorer. And, sitting here, all at once Mimotchka recognises clearly for the first time exactly what she wants. She wants to go somewhere alone. She will take her maid Katia with her and start off, and the others can all do what they like. The doctor inwardly makes a note of this brightening up, and, glancing occasionally at Mimotchka, continues giving mamma some indispensable information about Jeleznovodsk. Mimotchka is to drink iron water and take baths for two months, and then go for another month to Kislovodsk to, so to say, polish off, and by the autumn she will be so much better that it will be quite impossible to recognise her.

"God grant it, God grant it!" says

mamma, with a sad, doubting smile, and delicately slipping a little pinkish paper[1] into the doctor's hand, she follows Mimotchka out of the consulting-room, letting the next patient pass in in his turn.

"Well, Mimi," says mamma, taking her seat in the carriage by the side of her daughter, "what do you say to his idea? I think we ought to go. As he is going to be there himself. . . . Will you go?"

Mimotchka is silent. Her momentary animation has again changed into an expression of suffering and apathy. Mamma looks at her and is silent for five minutes, at the end of which she repeats her question.

"What is the use of talking about it?" answers Mimotchka. "It matters little what I wish. . . . He will only say . . .

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[1] A ten-rouble bank-note, equal to about a guinea in English money.

He will say again . . ." (Mimotchka sighs.) "He will say, 'Let's go to the country!'"

And Mimotchka sheds bitter tears.

Mamma is in despair, but tries to smile.

"Oh, do stop, stop crying; don't excite yourself so, darling! . . . Of course we won't go to the country. . . . He is so fond of you. He will do anything you like. Hier encore, il m'a dit. . . . Do stop crying, Mimi; it's so bad for you! Where is your *sel de vinaigre?* . . . Smell it, dear; it's all because you are so tired. . . . Where are we going: to Julia's or shopping?"

"To Knopps'," says Mimotchka, "I want to go to Knopps'."

They drive to Knopps'. On the way the ladies continue to discuss Doctor Variashski's advice. Sniffing at the smelling-salts and blowing her nose, Mimotchka explains herself more definitely. She would of course go without Spiridon Ivanovitch (it would anyhow be impossible for him to go). Baby also might stay with mamma. Mimotchka could not take him with her. She was already so sick of the child's crying that if she had to drag him everywhere after her she would never get any better. Besides, taking baby means taking nurse and the under-nurse and a doctor. Variashski does not attend children. What would become of them without a children's doctor? Does mamma want to kill baby? No; let her remain here with him, and Mimotchka will go alone with Katia. . . .

Mamma agrees with Mimotchka in everything but one point. To let her daughter go without her, her daughter who has fainting fits and hysterical attacks, to let her go with only a young and inexperienced girl—no, this is not to be thought of. . . . Mamma herself will go with her. But who will stay with baby? Perhaps Aunt Julia would take him and his nurse with her to the country? Oh yes, she will take him! . . . At Knopps' all other anxieties are momentarily lost sight of in the anxiety of choosing an umbrella. Mimotchka turns over the whole shop in search of an umbrella with a handle the like of which she can only have seen in her dreams. In the meantime she comes across many new, useful, and practical objects which may be serviceable to her on her approaching journey, and which she buys. So that, when she takes her seat with mamma in the carriage, quite a pile of parcels and boxes is carried after them. Mimotchka looks refreshed and calmer.

"You're not too tired, Mimi? Perhaps we had better leave Julia for another time ?" asks mamma.

"No, no, better do it all at once," says Mimotchka, closing her eyes.

Aunt Julia receives on Wednesdays. Visitors and tea in the afternoon; cards and now and then a dance for Zina and the young people in the evening.

Aunt Julia is a much respected, clever woman, with a great deal of character. Her sisters say of her: "Julie est une femme de beaucoup d'esprit, mais elle manque de cœur. C'est tout le contraire d'Annette."

Aunt Julia is an irreproachable wife, housewife, and mother. She has brought up her two elder children extremely well—Vova, a rosy-faced cavalry officer, and Zina, who has been educated at Trouba's.[1]

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[1] A famous ladies' school, that was under the patronage of the late Grand Duchess Helen.

And Vova and Zina are the pride and joy of their mother's life, to whom, however, the Lord has sent a trial in the person of her youngest daughter Vava, a sickly, capricious, fanciful girl. They doctor her up and correct her, but all to no purpose. Up to now Vava is the nightmare, plague, and cross of Aunt Julia's life.

When mamma and Mimotchka enter Aunt Julia's lilac drawing-room, they find a great many ladies there and a few young men, friends of Vova's. A cross-fire of conversation is going on in the room.

"And so you're going again to Merekule?"[1]

"Yes, to Merekule. We're always faithful to Merekule. And you?"

"Oh, je n'aime pas à avoir une *datcha*; j'aime mieux rester ici. Then I can go to one place one day and another the next."

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[1] A seaside resort in Finland.

"Et Louise? . . . Elle est toujours à Naples?"

"Comment? Le bordeaux avec le rose pâle. . . . Oh, mais quand c'est fait par une française, par une bonne faiseuse, . . . c'est délicieux comme mélange." . . .

"And so yesterday I went to the exhibition." . . .

"What did you think of the exhibition?"

"Oh dear, how we laughed! . . . We go in and whom do we meet . . ."

"Et tous les soirs elles vont aux îles. Et tous les soirs c'est la même chose. C'est triste." . . .

Mimotchka is met with inquiries about her health. Mamma informs her nearest neighbours that they have only just come from Variashski's.

"How can you have any confidence in

Variashski ?" says Aunt Mary in horror, as she shakes the ash off her cigarette. "He simply murdered a friend of mine. She died under the knife. And afterwards it appeared that there was no need at all of an operation. . . . It was all a mistake." . . .

"You're mixing it up, Mary. You told us that story of Lisinski."

"Really ? Well, perhaps. It's all the same. One's as bad as the other."

"Why don't you try homœopathy ?" says a homœopathic lady. "I am sure it would do your daughter good ; especially in cases of nervous illnesses." . . .

"Yes ; I really do not understand," continues Aunt Mary, finishing another cigarette, "why you go to Variashski. Isn't he an *accoucheur ?* . . . Si c'est une maladie de nerfs, why don't you consult Merjeffsky ?"

"And I should have taken her straight to Botkin," says Aunt Julia. "She could not have got so thin without some cause. He would have determined what her illness is, and would have recommended you a specialist if he thought necessary. I only believe in Botkin."

"And even Botkin makes mistakes," says the homœopathic lady. "No, seriously, try homœopathy. Why, I myself am a living advertisement for homœopathy. Just think how many doctors I have consulted, how many remedies I have tried. . . . And only since I consulted Brazolle . . ."

"Brazolle, oh yes, Brazolle! Why, I have met him in society. Il est très bien."

"Is he married? Who is he married to?"

The medical conversation becomes general.

"Brazolle? Yes, who did he marry? And Solovieff, what a wonderfully conscientious doctor he is. Of course, of course. . . . He has a hospital of his own. . . . And he is so busy, so very busy. . . . And Baron Vreffski. . . . You're joking? Not in the least. . . . An extraordinary case. . . . He cured a blind man, a real blind man, perfectly blind, whom I saw with my own eyes, . . . with that water of his, or by electricity. . . . Enfin il réussit. . . . Of course faith has a great deal to do with it. . . . Oh, I should think so! . . . For instance, Father John[1] . . . Oh, ce n'est plus du tout la même chose. . . . Vous croyez? Mais, c'est un saint! Oh, he's only a sinful man like the rest of us, je ne crois pas à sa sainteté. C'est la mode, voilà tout. . . . Oh, don't say so. . . . If you only saw him, . . . a little, thin man, . . . and with such a look in his eyes, something so heavenly! . . . He took tea with us and ate some fruit. . . . He is very fond of grapes. . . . Of course you must have faith. . . . Oh yes, faith—that's all! . . . But who works wonders—is Batmaieff. . . . Qu'est ce que ce Batmaieff? est-ce que c'est encore un saint? Non, non, c'est un médecin. . . . I can give you his address if you like." . . .

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[1] A priest at the cathedral of Cronstadt, famous for his faith healing.

Under cover of the noise mamma tells Aunt Julia about Variashski's sending them to Jeleznovodsk, and tries to sound her about taking charge of baby and his nurse for the summer. Aunt Julia will take charge of them with pleasure for the whole summer if mamma will consent to take Vava with her to Jeleznovodsk. Merjeffsky has advised that she should be separated from her family for a time, and has ordered her to take iron waters this summer. And they will all breathe more freely when Vava is gone. She is getting unbearable. She sets every one in the house at loggerheads. Her brother has predicted that she will finish on the gallows, and advises her being sent for two or three years to France, or perhaps to Switzerland to some *pension*. Her father won't hear of it; he always takes Vava's part. Good heavens, if only some one would take charge of her! . . . One service in return for another. Vava for baby, baby for Vava. And so the matter is settled.

At dinner mamma informs Spiridon Ivanovitch of the results of their visit to Variashski and of their negotiations with Aunt Julia. At the mention of the Caucasus Spiridon Ivanovitch brightens up and gets quite good-humoured. In the Caucasus were passed the best years of his life, the best years of his military service. Even now he has many friends both in Tiflis and Piatigorsk—a wonderful land of which he has wonderful reminiscences. *Shaslik*, *katchetinsk*, *narzan*,[1] and riding-parties through the moonlight nights! If only Spiridon Ivanovitch were free, he himself would go with the ladies. Of course Mimotchka must go and make a cure there. The sun and the iron waters will certainly restore her to health. Perhaps in August he might be able to join them there himself. Oh yes, yes; she must go. Of course it would never do for her to go alone. Goodness knows what sort of society is to be found at the springs. But with mamma and Vava she might venture. About how much will the journey cost?

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[1] *Shaslik*, small pieces of mutton roasted on a spit in Caucasian fashion. *Katchetinsk*, a wine something like Burgundy, made in the Caucasus. *Narzan*, a sparkling mineral water.

May in Petersburg. A cold wind raises clouds of dust in the streets, but the bright sun, the ladies' light gauze veils and parasols, and the noise of wheels, relieving the deep stillness of winter—all this already tells of spring, and what speaks more clearly of it than anything is the pure blue sky, across which all kinds of bright hopes and promises for the future flit alluringly. It seems to say that somewhere, far away from the granite quays and stone houses, from the dusty streets and squares with their meagre foliage, spring has already come, real spring, with her light breezes, with the nightingales' and larks' trills, with the scent of lilacs and cherry blossoms in the air—spring, that gladdens the heart of everyone who wishes to get away and can from the close, dusty town; and everyone who wishes to and can hastens to do so.

At the Nicholas railway station there is bustle and animation. Porters and carriers are rushing up and down the platform and jostling each other at the doors. From the refreshment rooms comes the noise of knives and forks, the clinking of glasses, the sound of conversation and exclamations, the scraping of feet, and all the busy fuss and noise of a crowd in movement.

On the platform, in front of the high, blue railway carriage, stands an elegant group seeing Mimotchka off. It is composed of the stout Spiridon Ivanovitch in his crimson-lined overcoat,[1] the tall and majestic Aunt Julia with a long eyeglass, through which she superciliously examines the surrounding public; the fat, rosy-faced

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[1] Russian generals wear overcoats lined with crimson.

Vova, Aunt Julia's favourite, her joy and pride; pretty Zina, in a huge, fashionable hat and short, fashionable jacket, and with two little white dogs, who look on God's world as haughtily and indifferently as their mistress; Mdme. Lambert, her governess; the three sisters Poltavsteff in thick veils; Aunt Mary with her son, and Aunt Sophy with her husband. Mimotchka is already seated in the carriage with her lapdog, which she could not make up her mind to leave behind her in Petersburg, and is smelling her *sel de vinaigre*. She is dreadfully tired, and besides that she is so sick of them all. The sooner she gets off the better. And there is Spiridon Ivanovitch, climbing up into the carriage again, and almost tumbling into the cushions, to inquire if she is quite comfortable. . . . Quite, quite; she has everything she wants!

Vava, a thin, black-eyed girl of sixteen, stands on the platform by her father, and, holding on to him with both hands, gives him her word of honour not to quarrel with her aunt, and in general to be good, and not like she is in Petersburg. And Vava, in her turn, makes him promise that he will write her long letters and often.

Mamma is fussily and anxiously whispering to Aunt Julia, giving her last instructions about baby, nurse, and the servants she has left behind. Then the expression of both their faces changes. Mamma's takes one of condolence and sympathy, Aunt Julia's of patient endurance; evidently they are talking of the cross she has to bear—of Vava.

"I know it's a great charge," says Aunt Julia, "but I will do all I can for you in return. And the principal thing is, that she must not on any account go out alone."

The two elder Poltavsteffs are smiling at Mdme. Lambert and playing with Zina's dogs; the youngest, coquettishly turning up her eyes, tells Vova that she does not believe either in friendship or love.

"And, in my opinion, it's all folly," says Aunt Mary. "What is the use of their going there? Why, they will all die of hunger. I know perfectly well what the Crimea and the Caucasus are. Starvation, *ennui*, and dirt. It's simply throwing away money. And why have they such confidence in Variashski? As if there were no doctors abroad!"

"Yes, indeed!" agrees Aunt Sophy. "We were told to go to Essentouki, too, but of course we shall go to Carlsbad instead. As if it were possible!"

The last bell sounds. Vava gives her father a parting hug, and, with a little scream, throws herself impetuously into the carriage, getting very much in the guard's way as she does so. Aunt Julia exchanges a suffering look with Zina. Mimotchka shows her pale face at the window and smiles at her friends. They all nod, bow, and smile at her in return. "*Bon voyage! Bon voyage!*"

Spiridon Ivanovitch gazes after her with a tender, loving look, and the train smoothly and quietly moves from its place and glides out from under the dark arches of the station. Mamma makes the sign of the cross,[1] Mimotchka yawns, and Vava goes out of the *coupé*.[2]

Now they are at the end of the platform, now past the hoardings and the market gardens. The barracks, with all their windows staring at the departing train, have disappeared, and the train flies out into the open and steams along at full speed.

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[1] Orthodox Russians make the sign of the cross before they start on a journey.

[2] Russian railway carriages are constructed like American cars, and have a passage running through the middle.

Mamma makes a survey of the luggage. "Is everything here? . . . Is everything in its proper place? And where has Vava gone?" . . .

"She must be in the passage," answers Mimotchka lazily, closing her eyes.

"I think that is her singing. Do you hear? What a mad thing she is!" But Mimotchka only yawns.

The fact of Vava's immediately running away from them rather troubles mamma. How is she to manage this queer girl? The best way is to influence her by kindness and affection. Vava's father had begged mamma to do so, and Merjeffsky, the doctor, had also mentioned it. Of course she has such a highly-strung, nervous nature. Mamma and Aunt Julia have quite different ideas on the subject of education. Mamma always thought Aunt Julia was too harsh with Vava "On ne prend pas les mouches avec du vinaigre, mais avec du miel." Mamma will prove that it is quite possible to get on, even with Vava. "Julie est une femme de beaucoup d'esprit, mais elle manque de cœur." But mamma—is just the contrary. To use her own expression, with her the heart comes first, and the head last. She will influence Vava by kindness.

Vava remains in the passage, at the open window, singing at the top of her voice "Heavenly Cloudlets."

It is both wild and absurd, but mamma, on reflection, decides to leave her to herself, and not to interfere. Let her stand there and sing if she likes. After all, she is ill. She must first be tamed, and then re-educated.

And mamma, cautiously looking through the crack in the door, sits down again, and once more begins to count over the things and feel if the little leather bag containing money that is sewn in her dress is quite safe.

Mimotchka has taken off her travelling hat, unbuttoned her jacket, and, lying back on the velvet cushions, plays with her dog, pulling its ears, stroking its head, and talking to it.

"Well, what is it, Monitchka, my beauty? Does Monitchka want her tea? Yes? . . . She shall have it; she shall have it directly. How can the little dog go to bed without her tea! Ask grandmamma when we shall have tea? Yes, yes, dear, tea. . . . Du thé. . . . Et du sucre, oui un peu de sucre."

At Luban, the first station, the dog is regaled with tea, sugar, and biscuits.

The ladies also take tea, brought to them in the carriage by a tall, fine-looking young guard, upon whom the crimson coat lining and liberality of Spiridon Ivanovitch have made a due impression.

It gets dark. Mimotchka puts the pug to bed; mamma puts Mimotchka to bed. The guard lifts up the cushioned seat and makes up a bed for Vava, who is placed above mamma; he draws the shade over the lamp, and in the *coupé* darkness and silence reign, only interrupted by the snoring of the pug curled up in a ball on its quilted feather-bed.

And the train flies along, thumping and rattling, flies across ditches, bridges, and marshes, and, singing its monotonous wild song, rocks the tired passengers to sleep.

Mamma feels very comfortable. Having settled Mimotchka (who has been very quiet and uncomplaining to-day) for the night, mamma puts on her slippers, takes off her cap, ties a little shawl over her head, and stretches herself out with great enjoyment on the sofa. Well, now they're off, mamma very much hopes that the waters and change of air will act beneficially on her poor invalid. And then Variashski will be there, that is the main point. On that score mamma is quite at rest. She owns to herself that she will enjoy the journey, the holiday, and the rest for a time from all the bother of the servants, from the continual thought and worry about dinner, about the meat, about baby's food and his bath, about the price of sugar and candles, about the laundress and the kerosine for the lamps. Three months of entire rest from it all! As to baby, there is no reason to be anxious about him. He is in trustworthy hands, and will be most carefully looked after. Besides, Spiridon Ivanovitch will go to Peterhof to see him. And in the autumn Spiridon Ivanovitch himself is expecting a reward from the Emperor, which he is pretty sure to get. So that everything is very satisfactory on that side. And, in the meantime, they will travel, breathe the fresh air, and lay in stores of health and strength for the winter. Vava, now asleep over mamma's head, may certainly give some trouble, but well, never mind if she does. The great thing will be to influence her by kindness. Katia shall always go out with her; Aunt Julia has given Katia extra wages, and is paying her journey one way. In general, Aunt Julia is behaving very liberally about Vava's cure, her board, lodging, and any unforeseen expenses that may be incurred on her account. Mamma is taking such a lot of money with her that she really will hardly sleep at night for fear of thieves. And yet her sisters say that Julia is mean. No, she isn't mean. She is pedantic, and a little near about money perhaps, but not mean. For instance, she has allowed two hundred roubles for the doctor who is to attend Vava during the summer. Mamma thinks it a great deal too much. Surely Mimotchka won't have to pay Variashski as much? Oh no. They paid him very little in Petersburg? And a hundred roubles would be more than sufficient. Or perhaps they might have to give him a hundred and fifty. Mamma has so much confidence in him. And really he is such a nice, sympathetic man . . . and un bel homme too. But still a hundred would be quite enough. A hundred? . . . a hundred and fifty . . . or a hundred? . . .

And without having decided the question, mamma begins a gentle snore.

Mimotchka lies on the opposite sofa, gracefully resting her pretty head on her hand. She likes lying there, and thinks it a great deal nicer than in her own bed at home. There, when she had suffered so much from sleeplessness, she had been surrounded by such absolute stillness and silence from without, that she had felt all in a disturbance and tumult within. Everything in her had seemed to tremble, beat, knock, and shake. What exhaustion and what torments she had endured! But here, on the contrary, here all the noise and disturbance are from without, and that is what acts beneficially on her. She likes the whistling and ringing, the shaking and swaying of the sofa, the noise of the wheels, the jarring of the window-panes, and the rattling of the cinders in the ashpan. All these chaotic sounds soothe her and lull her to sleep. She enjoys lying there, and thinks about her new dresses. What hat shall she wear with her *mousse* gown ? She is taking five hats with her, but none of them quite suits with the *mousse* gown ; perhaps the blue flowers might be taken out of the black hat, and pale pink flowers and *mousse* ribbon put in instead. And Mimotchka thinks over the hat. But what is really perfect, indisputably perfect, is—her riding-habit. She has never had a bodice in her life that fits her like that. It's a dream ! When the riding-habit had been brought home from Tedeschi's and Spiridon Ivanovitch had seen the bill, he had grumbled at the expense, and she had cried. How stupid she had been ! What was there to cry about when the bodice fitted so divinely ? But who would she ride with? Variashski would be there. She liked him very much. He was so tall and had such a good figure. He had said, "I will see that you are not dull." Perhaps they would be neighbours. They would become better acquainted. It doesn't matter about his being a doctor. He has his rank of general,[1] just the same as Spiridon Ivanovitch. They would get intimate and ride together. No doubt he rides well. He . . .

And Mimotchka, closing her eyes, clearly sees the figure of Doctor Variashski; by degrees the figure begins to look at her from the back of the velvet sofa, from the looking-glass door, from the shaking windows, covered with their blue blinds, and from the ceiling with its glimmering, shaded light. And either the influence of her doctor's image, or her confidence in him, but anyhow something makes Mimotchka fall asleep, fall asleep without chloral or valerian, and she sees in her dreams the figure of Doctor Variashski.

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[1] In Russia, as in Germany and Austria, the civil service is divided into ranks like the military service.

Vava is more wakeful than any of them. She has no desire to sleep. She would like even now to be standing at the open window, inhaling the night breezes and watching how thicket after thicket vanishes, how the lights gradually appear in the open, and how the stars are beginning to shine in the heavens. But she had given her word of honour to be obedient, and so her aunt had hardly hinted that it was time to go to sleep when Vava at once climbed up into her bed. Now she is sorry to be lying down here. She finds it stuffy and dull; besides which she has to lie very quiet so as not to wake mamma and Mimotchka. Vava is glad that she is going to the Caucasus, and chiefly glad to be going alone; for Vava considers that she is going alone. She knows that mamma and Katia will be so taken up with Mimotchka and her comforts that they will not have any time left for her. She will be free. And for her that is the chief thing: to be free and in the open air the whole day long. What happiness!

There she will walk about the mountains and the forests without any French or English governess at her side to poison her pleasure. It will be warm there, it will be a beautiful place: there will be mountains, verdure, and sunshine. . . . There will be fresh people, fresh acquaintances. Perhaps there she will at last see and get to know those great and good people whom she so longs and so looks forward to meeting with. People like Washington, Cromwell, William Tell, Joan of Arc, or the mother of the Gracchi. . . . It is impossible that such people should not exist. If they were to be found in history it proved that they really had existed, and so such people must still exist. Only she has not met them. But that was because it had so happened. And she will yet meet with them, because she so wishes, so longs to become acquainted with them, to live in their intimacy, to learn of them, to raise herself to their level. . . . She will never believe that the whole world is only inhabited by people like her family's acquaintances. Oh! those acquaintances! How can anyone live in such a senseless, stupid fashion! If they were not sometimes roused from their apathy by avarice, envy, and vanity they would probably go to sleep altogether, and never wake again. And the majority of those she knows lead this sort of life, such a mean, empty, aimless, senseless existence. This is how her mother, sister, and aunts live. . . . They laugh at her, they call her odd, queer, and fantastic because she longs for something different, for something nobler and worthier. She understands that she must seem unbearable to them, but she cannot consider herself to blame. . . . Her father —he is not like all the rest; he, the darling, is good. He is clever and kind, and how kind he is to her! If it were not for him she would most likely have run away long ago. Her father is a splendid man! But still he is afraid. . . . Yes, he is afraid of his wife and her sisters, and gives way to them. Why? . . . He almost seems to want to make himself appear like one of them, and when he does show the best side of his nature he does it in a joking sort of way, as if he were laughing at himself and excusing himself to them.

Why? Who does he give way to, who is he afraid of? Why not make them do as he chooses and follow him? How different it would all be if people were only bold, firm, and strong! . . . But those whom she knows are all alike—

"They are ashamed to own their love, they thrust
thought aside,
And are ready to barter their free will. . . ."

But still it is impossible that there should not be any genuine people in the world. Only she has not met with them. Perhaps there are hardly any in their circle. But still the world is wide, and somewhere there are simple, honest, labour-loving, healthy people; energetic, disinterested, large-minded men; tender, self-denying, patient women. . . .

Of course Vava will get to know such people. They will teach her, and will explain away all her doubts. She has so many doubts! She had had an idea of writing to Count Leo Tolstoy, but she was ashamed to. And afterwards, when she heard that one of her friends had written to him, she didn't like it at all, and was very glad that she had not carried out her idea. As if every little beetle could venture to trouble such a sun! No, you must think out things for yourself, and make yourself worthy of the friendship of great and good people. And she will try to; yes, she will try. . . .

She thinks that just there where she is going, where there are mountains and eagles, where nature itself is wonderful, there she will find these great and good people. There everything will be beautiful. There will be no affectations, no empty talk; her mother will not be there, with her cold inimical glance, nor her brother with his joking and mocking, nor her sister, that living fashion-plate. . . . But suddenly finding herself judging her relations, Vava, as usual, is horrified at her own wickedness and malice, and at once begins praying earnestly to God, that He would forgive her all her sins, both the sin of judging her relations and the terrible sin of not loving her mother; that He would somehow help her to bear everything and prepare her for life; that He would sustain her and not forsake her, and would give her strength and health both of soul and body. And with prayer on her lips and in her thoughts, thin, black-haired Vava goes to sleep on her perch above mamma, who is snoring regularly, and pale, ethereal Mimotchka.

On the third day the ladies arrived safely at Rostoff, where they had to change carriages. In spite of the comfort with which they had travelled, they were very tired. And both Vava and Mimotchka, seated at the table awaiting the breakfast they had ordered, looked so out of sorts and depressed that it was not difficult to recognise in them patients for Jeleznovodsk. Mimotchka was so tired that she had not even strength to raise her smelling-salts to her nose. And leaning against the wall, she gazed apathetically at the row of bottles with their gaudy tickets ranged in front of her. The pug lay by her side, and, its tongue hanging out of its mouth, breathed hard. Vava also no longer looked out for Washington or the mother of the Gracchi among the crowd. . . . Her head ached, her temples throbbed, and she could hardly see out of her eyes, besides which, instead of Washington and the mother of the Gracchi, she saw close to her on one side a lady with a shaking head, whom she recognised from seeing in Dr. Merjeffsky's waiting-room, and on the other, a boy with St. Vitus's dance, who alternately put out his tongue and made strange contortions with his body.

In fact, the majority of the public were already talking of the proximity of the waters, this pool of Siloam towards which the sick and suffering flock from all parts of Russia. . . . Pale, hysterical ladies, paralytics, yellow-faced, gloomy-looking patients for Essentouki, invalids of every kind and description from Piatigorsk, all these moved or sat about in the dusty, grimy waiting-room, resting and eating while they waited for the train.

Now someone was brought in, carried on a stretcher. Mimotchka closed her eyes. Good heavens! is it possible that they will have to bear the sight of such horrors the whole summer? Better die at once than continue this dreadful journey.

But suddenly, amidst this ill-favoured, nondescript crowd, there came into the room, from the town entrance, an elegantly dressed man of about thirty-five, whose appearance attracted general attention. He was followed by an enormous black retriever and a porter carrying a handsome portmanteau and a railway rug strapped up and fastened with beautiful new straps. The young man came to the table at which Vava and Mimotchka were seated, carelessly paid the porter, carelessly ordered something to eat for himself and something for his dog of the insinuating waiter, sat down to the table, and, without dropping his eyeglass, rapidly glanced at Vava and Mimotchka, then took off his eyeglass and again, but this time more fixedly and attentively, looked at Mimotchka.

She had never expected to meet such a fine gentleman in that stuffy, dingy waiting-room, amongst all those deformities, and was sorry that she had not taken more pains to freshen and beautify herself. Vava began, openly and rather loudly, admiring the dog, while Mimotchka examined the dog's master's pale face, with its beautiful dark eyes, and all the details of his perfect toilet.

Mamma, who had been rushing about settling Katia, came back, panting from the heat and fatigue, and sat down by the side of them. Breakfast was brought to the ladies; Mimotchka unwillingly put up her veil: she thought she must be looking awful; but she was mistaken, and of this she was at once assured by a glance from the black eyes that rested so admiringly on her. Mimotchka felt more cheerful than she had for a long time, and from that moment her journey appeared to her in a perfectly different light. It was certainly rather a bore, but still it was something fresh, and a change from the monotonous, everyday Petersburg life.

Mamma began talking, and so he learned that her name was Mimotchka, and that she was going to the Caucasus. And he? Where is he going? Perhaps also to the springs? . . . He is pale, and something in his look at the corners of his mouth tells of weariness, if not of suffering. . . . And he is thin, his cheeks are even rather sunken. . . . Poor fellow, he is ill too, he also suffers. . . . And he is so handsome, so handsome. . . . And what eyes! His breakfast was now also brought to him and he began eating, while Mimotchka secretly continued her observations. Everything about him—his way of eating and sitting, and the way his hair was done, and his dress—showed a man belonging to good society.

Meanwhile Vava had already stroked the dog and was about to give him half her chicken, but mamma looked at her so imploringly, that she sent away the dog and assumed her most decorous and sedate expression. The Newfoundland, turning about round her, and offended at her sudden indifference, went up to the pug and tried to make acquaintance. But when Monitchka awoke and saw such a monster near her, she was horribly frightened, trembled all over her little body, and began to growl and bark furiously. The young man called off the Newfoundland, and the ladies found out that the dog's name was Rex. Then they all went on with their breakfast; but Mimotchka felt as if something had brought her nearer to the young man—very likely the fact of their sharing the same table, the same outspread tablecloth, on which stood a plate of bread and a decanter of water also for them both in common, or else because they were both so young, so handsome and elegant, and so different from all the countrified landowners and dishevelled, tumbled-looking provincials, with their cigarettes in their mouths, who surrounded them. They breakfasted, and their eyes often met and said something to each other. He had large, dark eyes; she had eyes like a Madonna.

Mimotchka got brighter and brighter. The fatigue and slight headache, the clinking of glasses, the scraping of feet, and the talk of the motley crowd, all this was something new, the beginning of something. . . . And the time till the departure of the train flew by imperceptibly.

The ladies took their places in the ladies' compartment, and he got into the next carriage, so that Mimotchka had only to look out at the window to see him also looking out of his window.

And now again the train flies on, flies through the green steppes with their many-coloured spring flowers. In the ladies' compartment, besides our ladies, there was a lady from Moscow, with whom mamma at once made acquaintance. The lady, although she came from Moscow, knew half Petersburg, and mamma and she soon found that they had many friends and even relations in common. The lady had been in the Caucasus and was able to give mamma a great deal of valuable information about hotels, lodgings, laundresses, &c. And mamma, in her turn, told her all about Mimotchka's illness, about her fainting fits and sleeplessness, while the Moscow lady, glancing at Mimotchka, who was now looking quite rosy and bright, and laughing and chattering like a child with Vava, did not know whether mamma was making fun of her or not.

At every station *he* got out and walked up and down in front of their carriage, looking at Mimotchka, who either gazed at the sky or the station. And how this shortened the journey! Now he had taken off his hat and wore a travelling cap, which suited him even better. Vava soon noticed his ways and said to Mimotchka—

"The Adonis seems to be airing himself for your benefit. What stupid shoes he wears!"

Mimotchka took his part, saying that the shoes were all right, and that she had seen some just like them worn by a French actor at his benefit; very likely they were the fashion. . . .

When the evening drew near Vava went off to her favourite post at the open window to see the sunset. . . . And standing there, watching the rosy and lilac clouds changing their shape with every moment, and the wide, green steppe, Vava felt arise within her a feeling which often took possession of her, a flood of love towards God and man. She would have liked to enfold the whole world, the whole of mankind, in her embrace as brothers and give them light and warmth; she longed to do great deeds, to sacrifice herself, to accomplish some good work, not narrow, like that beaten track with the rails laid down, but wide, unlimited, boundless as the steppe, as the heavens, as the sea, as joy, even as love itself! . . . The pale young moon already detached itself against the darkening sky. The sun had disappeared. With its setting the steppe had changed and was now covered with floating shadows. The world of spirits, the world of dreams awoke. Vava watched the young moon and called to mind the books about spiritualism she had lately read. Is there any truth in it or not? How do souls live after they are separated from their bodies? Where are they? Why and how do they live? Do they see us? Do they pity us? Do our sufferings seem so small to them? Life and death. . . . How many mysteries, how many enigmas there are in nature! Is there anyone who knows everything, everything, or even a great deal, like Goethe's Faust did? And is it well to know so much, to understand everything, to see everything, to find the key to all mysteries, or is it better to be as she is and not know anything, but to feel a sense of happiness due only to her youth, to her heart overflowing with love, to the beauty of the steppe and the young moon? . . .

Mamma and the lady from Moscow went on talking incessantly. They could not quite recollect who Mdme. Verevkine's daughter by her first marriage, the one who had been previously engaged to Mestchersky, the brother-in-law of a mutual lady friend of theirs, had married. . . . Mimotchka did not remember either. . . . And Vava did not know. . . . Then mamma began enumerating to the lady all the things she was taking with her. Mamma was of the opinion that if you went abroad you need take very little with you, because abroad you could get everything everywhere. But in Russia, and especially in the provinces, it was impossible to get anything anywhere; so that you had to set out well provided. Mimotchka sat at the open window, looked at the young moon, and also indulged in dreams. Who could *he* be? Who is he? Whereto and wherefore is he travelling? She had noticed that he wore a wedding-ring.[1] Why does he look at her so? Has she taken his fancy? . . . How? By her beauty? But she has so gone off lately. Still she looks interesting to-day. She saw her reflection in the glass opposite and was astonished at herself. There is something in the expression of her eyes and about her complexion that beautifies her. Well, so much the better. Let him walk up and down if he likes, she will not prevent him. She does not respond to his glances, only perhaps very slightly and quite involuntarily. Anyhow there is no harm in it. . . . Where can he be going? And who is he? And Mimotchka gazed at the new moon, and the sparks flew past her like a golden rain, and the wind played with her fair curls. Mamma wanted to put up the window, but Mimotchka said it was too early yet and would be stuffy in the carriage.

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[1] Russian married men wear wedding-rings as well as women.

It was quite dark, and Vava, mamma, and the lady from Moscow were already asleep when Mimotchka put her head out of the window for the last time. The station was like all the other stations. A little two-storied wooden house, with a bell attached to it, and with lit-up windows, from which, behind the pots of geraniums and balsams, the station-master's untidy wife in a pink cotton dress looked out. The flickering light of the lamp lit up the dark platform, on which the motionless figures of the peasants stood staring stupidly at the train; the gendarme also stood motionless; the guard went past the carriage. Some one greeted the station-master. Ah, there he is! He isn't asleep yet. He again passed close to the carriage in which Mimotchka was seated, and this time he came so near and looked into her eyes so expressively that Mimotchka got frightened and pulled up the window. And the train sped along further. Mimotchka lay down to sleep, but she was disturbed and felt dissatisfied with herself, with him, and with everybody. Why did he look at her in that manner? It was impertinent. . . . How could he dare to? what did he take her for? She admitted that she herself was perhaps rather to blame; but why shouldn't she amuse herself a little on the journey? Of course in Petersburg she would never have allowed herself to do anything of the kind. How he looked at her, how he looked at her, to be sure! But anyhow he had beautiful eyes! She thought she had never seen such eyes. Well, now, enough of him—better forget all about him. Nobody will ever be the wiser, and he does not know who she is. To-morrow they will go off in different directions, and perhaps never see each other again. . . . It's time to go to sleep.

And Mimotchka turned the cushion and covered herself over with the wrapper. But the sofa was uncomfortable, and the carriage felt stuffy and smelt of smoke and coal. In vain she sniffed at her *sel de vinaigre* and counted out some drops of valerian—she only fell asleep when the carriage blinds began to whiten with the coming dawn.

And now at last the long journey is over. Vava is already gazing at the mountains, which the lady from Moscow names to her: Beshtau, Razvalka, and Jeleznaia.

The guard collects the tickets. The hand-baggage is strapped up. Mimotchka yawns; she has slept badly, and is not in good spirits. She feels as if she would like to die. The train stops at the station of the Mineral Waters, which is buried in a garden full of white acacias.

Good heavens, what a lot of passengers are getting out here! Will there be carriages enough? And how sweet the white acacia smells! What a sky! What fresh, pure air! Mamma hastily bids good-bye to the lady from Moscow, who is going on further, and loads three porters with the hand-baggage. Vava tries to make herself useful, finds Katia, and looks after the things; Mimotchka envelops herself in a thick veil and goes into the ladies' room. She feels very out of sorts, and still thinks she would like to die. She is aching all over, and tears of weakness almost choke her. She is rather ashamed of yesterday's exchange of glances. Only think, à son âge, dans sa position! . . . And besides, who knows who and what he is? She really had not seen him thoroughly well. It was all the darkness and her imagination. Perhaps he had been boasting in the carriage, although he has really nothing to boast about. And after all she does not care! And Mimotchka, without turning her head, crosses the room where the people are sitting and drinking tea; but even without looking she sees that he is differently dressed. And how pale he looks; he is really not nearly as handsome as she had thought yesterday. . . . Of course it was all owing to the darkness and her imagination.

A carriage is found and brought up, the things are put in it, and the ladies and Katia take their places inside.

"All right, drive on!"

The carriage rolls on through the green steppe and over the soft country road. In the heavens the larks are carolling. Other carriages overtake our ladies. Here is the lady with the shaking head and there is the boy with the St. Vitus's dance. . . . And here, passing all the others, another carriage flies along, in which *he* is seated, *he* "l'homme au chien," as Mimotchka calls him. He is wearing another hat, the third since yesterday, and at his feet, stretched out full length, lies the beautiful Newfoundland dog.

They follow him and then turn to the right. Why? Then they will not be together, they won't meet? Then their acquaintance has really come to an end? Where is he going? Mimotchka will not on any account inquire. Perhaps mamma will help her. Precisely so; mamma asks the driver:

"Where does that road lead to?"

"To Piatigorsk."

"Then we shall not pass by Piatigorsk?"

"And Jeleznovodsk—is it yet in sight?" asks Vava.

"There it is."

And the driver points with his whip to a little white hamlet nestling at the foot of the green mountain.

Presently the carriage enters a green grove of oaks and birch-trees. They all inhale the pure morning air delightedly.

Vava throws back her head and looks for the larks in the sky. . . .

Mamma sympathises with her; mamma also loves nature, loves forests and groves. Mimotchka doesn't understand it. She only likes trees round where the music plays, and then only when they stand in tubs and are kept in nice order, and no spiders, chrysalides, or other nasty things fall off them. At length, after passing the post-office, the carriage stops at the entrance of Mitroff's Hotel. Thank God, they have arrived!

"What a funny little place Jeleznovodsk is!" says Mimotchka. "Quite a country village!"

Three weeks have passed. Mimotchka had not felt dull. Mimotchka had improved in looks and was blooming. One day followed another in accordance with the regular, fixed *régime.* At seven o'clock Mimotchka and Vava got up, and at eight they were already at the morning music, where they drank the waters and walked up and down till breakfast-time. Afterwards a bath, then middle-day dinner, and again waters and more walking up and down, and again music and waters and walking up and down, and so on until the evening, when they went to bed tired out and slept like dead men.

Doctor Variashski, who had arrived at Jeleznovodsk a couple of days before them, met them very amiably; he recommended them apartments, he found them a man-cook, and he also recommended them a doctor for Vava, a specialist for nervous illnesses. He advised Mimotchka to ride on horseback, and offered to accompany her himself on her rides.

And all this was the more agreeable to mamma, because she believed in Variashski as firmly as she did in the Almighty!

And how conscientiously Mimotchka followed out her cure! Mamma watched it so strictly, that if at the spring they accidentally poured out a little more than half a tumbler of water for Mimotchka, she made them throw it all away and fill it up again. . . . As if it were possible to allow it! If you made a cure you must do it properly. The waters were not to be trifled with. . . .

And this conscientious cure greatly benefited Mimotchka. She had a pretty colour in her cheeks and her eyes shone brighter and more joyfully. . . . She did not get tired so soon, and both slept and ate better.

From the second evening after their arrival our ladies showed themselves daily at the music, where they at once attracted attention by the elegance of their toilettes and general appearance. Mamma found the society dreadful. The ladies looked like bakers' or farmers' wives, and the men were even worse. There was hardly any one from Petersburg, and nobody at all whom they knew. At first mamma only exchanged salutes with Variashski and an old maiden lady from Petersburg, who was there for the third summer with her brother, who had lost the use of his legs. The old maid felt quite at home, and seemed to think herself superior to everyone, for she held herself very proudly. She knew all the doctors, their wives, their histories, and their gossip. . . . And although in mamma's eyes the doctors' wives were as bad as the bakers' and farmers' wives, still she examined them with some interest through her eyeglass while listening to Mdlle. Kossovitch's tales.

Vava sat stiffly and obediently by mamma's side, but still kept a lookout for Washington and William Tell, in case they should be passing among the crowd, and, not finding them, amused herself watching the games of the children playing in the circle round them.

Mimotchka smiled up at Doctor Variashski while she looked out for *him*, l'homme au chien. But he was not there.

He only showed himself at the music two weeks after their arrival, when Mimotchka had already left off expecting him and had almost forgotten him. And he appeared in the society of the most dreadful ladies. Beside the bakers' wives and the doctors' wives and all the other provincials, there were also actresses at the springs. There was almost the entire company from the Kieff theatre. Among the actresses there was a certain Mdlle. Lenskaia, a very pretty light comedy actress, and with her her sister, who was not an actress, but who was also decidedly pretty. Both sisters were always showily dressed, and wore very light colours; they were always very lively and always surrounded by men. Every new arrival at Jeleznovodsk followed in their train for the first few days, but afterwards, when he had settled down and looked about, he generally found other acquaintances and hardly even bowed to the sisters; but still as there were fresh arrivals every day, they were never left without cavaliers. Well, it was with them that he appeared at the music. He was giving his arm to the eldest Lenskaia (not the actress), who was smiling more gaily than ever and showing her beautiful white teeth. They were followed by the younger Lenskaia and an actress named Morozoff, surrounded by a crowd of young men. In front of them all walked Rex. His master was again quite differently dressed, and wore a light suit and a hat with a white veil round it, but there was still the same *cachet* of elegance about him. Vava called the dog loudly by its name, which made *him* look round and recognise the ladies. But he only glanced at them rapidly and then immediately began whispering something to his companion. Then the whole party seated themselves in a semi-circle close by Mimotchka, to whom it was extremely unpleasant.

What sort of a man could he be to find pleasure in such society ? . . . From the very first Mimotchka had thought Mdlle. Lenskaia's sister perfectly disgusting. She is pretty, certainly ; but what a creature! . . . And what horrid-looking eyes she has—so watery and with ugly, dark circles round them. And her hands are not good. And how vulgarly she dresses! what a mixture of colours! And Rex lies at her feet, and she strokes his head with her ungloved hand, and laughs and beams with pleasure because *he* is evidently saying something flattering, amiable, and agreeable to her.

Mimotchka felt hurt. She was sitting there alone near mamma and Mdlle. Kossovitch, who went on talking. Vava had gone off with a new acquaintance to her gymnastics. Variashski was not at the music; nor were there any officers of her husband's division there. And she had to sit alone and look at the mountains she was so tired of and at that improper set of people.

That evening she returned home in very

low spirits; she even felt ready to cry. No doubt she had over-walked herself that day, or else it was the "reaction."

By the morning, however, her vexation had passed. It even seemed to her ridiculous to have so taken to heart the indifference of a man who was a perfect stranger to her. She doesn't want anyone. Is she looking out for an admirer? Good gracious, if she only liked, . . . why she could have the whole division at her feet, and not only officers either, but others besides. Isn't she pretty? At any rate she is as good-looking as those actresses in their many-coloured dresses.

And what does she care about them? what does it all matter to her? She has come here for her cure. She likes being here alone without Spiridon Ivanovitch and without baby. She feels as if she were a girl again, a free, young creature.

She knows that her toilettes are the best here, and that she herself is prettier than anyone. She can read it in the glances of the men and women she meets. . . . And that is all she requires.

She continued to drink the water conscientiously, occupied herself with her toilettes and her appearance, and when she met him (he had now settled at Jeleznovodsk) she looked at him with no more interest than if he were a lamp-post. But, without paying the least attention to him, she always saw how he was dressed, who he was with, what humour he was in, and how he looked at her. . . .

Vava, in the meantime, was in the seventh heaven. She went out alone. Mamma had not actually given her permission, but she winked at it. In the morning Vava went with Mimotchka to the music, but as soon as Doctor Variashski, or one of the officers of Spiridon Ivanovitch's division came up, Vava fled, and in a few minutes she was somewhere in the forest, in the thickly wooded paths or high up among the rocks, over which she clambered like a goat. She had her favourite corners for every hour of the day. She knew from where there was the best view of the sunset, where it was coolest at midday, and where it was warmest in the early morning. . . . Vava was not afraid of snakes, nor of the great tarantula spiders; she pushed her way through the heart of the forest, through the thick, high grass and nettles of the steppe, and came home with her shoes torn to pieces, her face and hands covered with scratches, burrs and grass sticking to her hair, and earwigs and caterpillars on her clothes and on her dress. . . . Katia, by mamma's order, had to dress her afresh and put her to rights, and Vava said laughingly that she only thoroughly enjoyed those walks which bore witness of her communion with nature. The mornings Vava generally spent up in the mountains. There, before you came to the top, was a little plateau, overgrown with wild hollyhocks and filbert bushes, where Vava lay among the grass or sat on a stone and gazed at Mount Beshtau, at the blue valleys, and at little Jeleznovodsk nestling under the mountains, with its clean white houses, and the gold cross shining on its church, and from where you could even hear the cocks crowing and the dogs barking. . . . And on the left, from the tufts of green trees, came the sounds of the orchestra playing the waltz "Bygone Days." There they were going round, those invalids that Vava knew so well, strolling about and meeting and greeting and looking at each other. Vava looked around her and thought that here also there was bustle and music. A chorus of crickets chirped the waltzes; the ants worked on busily and anxiously just like the doctors with their prey or without it. . . . And the ladybirds, beetles, caterpillars, butterflies and bees were the public. Vava thought it much nicer to be at this music than at the music below. Here she could lie on the grass and she was so happy, so happy! The sun warmed her chilly body, and in her soul there was such peace and joy as she had never known at home. Here she was with God! And she experienced a full sense of blessedness without anything to mar it. From afar she even loved her mother. When she thought of her she pictured her in the most sympathetic colours. . . . Active, judicious, careful, although severe. . . . And Vava dreamt of a time when they would understand each other better and become friends, and Vava would show that there really was some good in her. . . . Her brother would marry and leave his family, her sister would also marry, although Zina always said that she would only marry a man with a title. . . . Still somebody with a title might perhaps be found . . . And Vava would remain at home alone with her father and mother. . . . Then most likely life would be easier for her and everything would come right. And meanwhile she is quite content to be here. She does not feel either lonely or unhappy. The sun's caresses warm her, the wood is full of sounds of life, the bees hum on the white acacia, bending beneath the weight of its flowers. . . . The butterflies circle in the air. . . . And

Vava is so happy, that she feels with all her soul that there is no creature on God's earth entirely forsaken, forgotten, and miserable. . . . And, lying on the grass, she looks at the heavens, while over her head a great eagle soars calmly up, as if carrying on his broad wings her dreams, her hopes, and her faith in her God.

Although mamma winked at these solitary walks of Vava's, in reality they very much troubled her. Even putting aside snakes and mad dogs, there was no knowing where she might lose herself or who she might meet. . . . In the mountains musicians roamed about and beggars as well. . . . So that mamma was partly glad when Vava made some friends and acquaintances for herself. And although these acquaintances were not such as she would have chosen for herself or Mimotchka, anyhow it was better than Vava's being alone. First of all, at the gymnastics, Vava made acquaintance with some children, then with their nurses, governesses, and relations, and before three weeks had elapsed she was united in bonds of the tenderest friendship with a young girl who had just finished her studies as pupil in the institution,[1] with a youth, the brother of the young girl, with a governess, with a little Moscow doctor and his wife, and with a student, the tutor of the actress Morozoff's ten-year-old boy.

They formed a little circle of their own, walked together, made excursions in the mountains and environs, lent each other books, talked and argued. . . . Vava was in ecstasies over her new acquaintances. Of course they were not quite Washingtons, but still they were thoroughly nice, good people, and how different from her Petersburg acquaintances! They did not ridicule anyone, were not proud of anything, they were severe to themselves and indulgent to others, they did not talk scandal, but occupied themselves with their own affairs. . . . They not only thought as she did about everything, but they had ideas and views of their own besides, which were new to her and awoke a host of fresh thoughts in her. This overjoyed her. Now she heard and read about all kinds of things—and there was somebody for her to share her impressions with too.

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[1] Government establishments for the education of young girls, daughters of gentlemen.

They were delightful people, and ever so much better than she was. . . . She was particularly fond of the governess: she was so intelligent, so patient and just. . . . Vava was not worth her little finger.

Of her home and mother Vava never

spoke to her new acquaintances. She would have thought it mean to complain or to try and interest them in her troubles. But, judging from their general opinions and other examples, she saw that from their point of view she was right in not liking the kind of life her family led and in wishing for something different. But for the present she must submit and wait, and afterwards she would be able to arrange her life as she wanted to.

And, thinking of how, some day in the future, she would arrange her life, Vava was particularly fascinated by one idea. She had found her mission, imagined a work after her own heart, found an object in life that was really worthy, interesting, and absorbing.

She could never live as Zina lived. If she had possessed some talent she would have lived for that, but she had no talents whatever, so this is what she would do. As soon as she was twenty-five, and everyone could see that she was going to be an old maid, then she would ask to be given her own money. And with this money she would open a home for children who had been forsaken by their parents. And she would take into her home all the poor, forsaken, lost, destitute children. . . . She would take care of them and she would have many, many children, first a hundred, then two hundred, and so on, more and more. And she herself would bathe and dry them, and dress them, and put them to bed, and teach them to walk and talk, read and think, love and forgive. . . .

In her imagination Vava already saw her rooms, full of children's cots of dazzling whiteness, and in them the children, pretty, little, tender, helpless children. . . . They went to sleep, they awoke and smiled, and screamed, and cried, and called her "Mamma!" And she loved them all, every one of them. . . . Some were healthy, handsome, and lively, and she was justly proud of them; others, poor, weakly, and crippled, and she was tender and pitiful to them. . . . And she loved all of them, yes, all. . . . Then they grew up and their characters developed. They helped her to educate the litle ones as they came in. They laboured and studied and developed. . . . And now they became the Gracchi and the William Tells that she had been looking for. . . . And they entered upon life's work while she, old and grey, followed after them ready to bless or console. . . .

If only she could soon be twenty-five! She would reach that age some day. Mimotchka had already reached it. And meanwhile she must study and prepare herself, and above all, correct herself and attain a proper equilibrium of mind. With her character it would be difficult. But what of that? She would strive hard with herself. And then the work itself would give her strength. She would have helpers too. She would take into her home young girls, portionless, good young girls, and make them so happy that they would not feel their position irksome. Then she would take old women, like those that go into almshouses, old and poor. They could be the nurses. She did not want any Swedish gymnastics or English *bonnes*; everything would be on the simplest footing, without any pretensions or nonsense. And then, and then . . .

And her castles in the air so inspirited Vava that she got stronger every day, and wrote her mother the most affectionate and respectful letters, and was so attentive to her aunt that the good lady became really attached to her, and often said, "Décidément Julie est une personne de beaucoup d'esprit, mais elle manque de cœur."

At first Doctor Variashski had paid Mimotchka a great deal of attention. He walked with her, sat by her at the music, rode on horseback with her, and came to tea with them several times, but he soon got tired of it. Mamma wearied him with her perpetual chatter, besides which Mimotchka herself was so unamusing and difficult to get on with.

She, on her side, was quite disillusioned with the doctor, whom she had liked so much at first. Mimotchka was spoilt and pampered, and accustomed to everything being done for her happiness and pleasure, while the doctor was dreadfully selfish and only thought of himself. For instance, he rode on horseback with her, and trotted the whole time (because it was good for his health). And what a state she was in, poor thing! And once, too, when she had only just drank her koumiss, her habit bodice felt so tight, and she endured such dreadful torments that she even cried when she got home. And mamma, while rubbing her side and counting out fifteen drops of valerian for her to take, thought, "What pigs those men are" (mamma sometimes used rather vulgar expressions to herself). "They go galloping on for their own pleasure, and never remember that the poor thing isn't strong. And he a doctor, too!"

But what made mamma more indignant then anything with Doctor Variashski, was that she heard he was completely captivated by the charms of his neighbour and patient, Mdme. Tchereshneff. Mdme.

Tchereshneff was a widow of thirty-four, who had come to the springs with her son, a boy of six, and his nurse. She occupied rooms next door to Variashski, and their balconies touched. She wore pretty toilettes, and in general was interesting and elegant-looking. All this mamma learnt from Mdlle. Kossovitch.

Soon she was able to assure herself with her own eyes of the truth of this information. Variashski walked with Mdme. Tchereshneff, he rode with her and went out shooting eagles with her (yes, she went out shooting—that showed what sort of woman she was!), he went to tea with her, played with her boy, in fact, they were hardly ever apart. This made our ladies very, very much cooler towards Variashski. Of course mamma did not in the least wish him to compromise her daughter in the way he was compromising Mdme.

Tchereshneff. But then he would never dare to. Mimotchka and Mdme. Tchereshneff were two quite different people. Mimotchka might have admirers, but she must not be talked about. And then to allow a doctor to pay you attention too, a man to whom you would give ten roubles for a visit, and who you could dismiss like a hairdresser. Mamma was really surprised at Mdme. Tchereshneff! . . . If only Mimotchka had liked, of course, she could have found something better. . . . Yes, if only she had wished it, the whole division would have been at her feet. . . . And princes besides! But, a doctor. . . . A man whom you paid for his visits! . . . And mamma had thought him such a serious, respectable man! . . . Certainly he was no longer very young. And to spend whole days at Mdme. Tchereshneff's; *à son âge!* . . . It was evidently true what Doctor Shavronski said about Variashski's going out in a fez and with a pipe in his mouth, followed by a train of eight ladies, who were all in love with him. . . . What things one does hear and see! . . . And Doctor Variashski's proceedings so cooled mamma's and Mimotchka's feelings towards him that it was positively decided to pay him a hundred roubles and not a hundred and fifty. Mamma had even ceased believing in him as if he were the Almighty.

Kislovodsk was preparing for the season. The prices in the hotels had already gone up in expectation of the invalids who were making cures in other places and had to come on here to finish off, and for a rest after the strictness of the *régime*.

"Kislovodsk," says Lermontoff, "is the scene of the *dénouement* of all the love stories begun at the foot of Beshtau, Mashouka, and Jeleznaia."

Here, in general, accounts are wound up, intrigues unravelled, and deceptions unmasked; doctors count over their fees, and the invalids prove their newly acquired health; in a word, here, in the Narzan-laden atmosphere, the grand finale of the watering season is played out.

Kislovodsk was preparing for the season. And meanwhile, in the other stations, all kinds of love affairs were beginning and developing, and would be wound up at Kislovodsk. Widows suffering from *ennui*, wives separated from their husbands, dissatisfied wives, giddy, volatile, sentimental old maids, and would-be brides—all these swarmed and crowded at the Jeleznovodsk springs, and, having drawn from them fresh health and courage, threw out lines and nets right and left. And fishes, both large and small, nibbled and were entangled in them.

And so the day came when Doctor Ivanoff's first three patients migrated from Jeleznovodsk to Kislovodsk, and Doctor Grazianski's seven patients moved over from Piatigorsk to Jeleznovodsk, where the season was at its full height. The invalids had got better, they had made acquaintance with each other, and were well amused as they let themselves be drawn into the usual idle, though frivolously busy, watering-place life. The evenings got darker, the stars brighter, and the storms more frequent.

Mimotchka was not dull. She had got even prettier, and was looking blooming. She hadn't any flirtation going on, oh no! Did her heart beat too calmly, or was all around her unworthy of passion?

Neither one nor the other. Simply she was too well brought up for any deviation from the path of duty. And although all around her, under her very eyes, couples met, smiled, and flirted, although she was surrounded by an atmosphere of love-making, Mimotchka was perfectly cool and calm. What were all these bakers' and farmers' wives to her? What did she care about all these people that swarmed and crawled on the grass under the sun's rays like beetles and grasshoppers? They might live as they liked, she would live as she "ought." And, proud in the knowledge of her irreproachableness and inaccessibility, Mimotchka, young, fresh, and pretty, tripped lightly and gracefully through the green alleys, without paying the slightest attention either to the approving and admiring glances directed at her, or to the meetings with *him*, with *l'homme au chien* (although he had grown ever so much handsomer!).

No, Mimotchka had not the least shade of a flirtation, and, together with mamma, made fun of their neighbour on the adjoining balcony, a young widow from Smolensk, who, although she was still wearing mourning, said to her acquaintances, "Yes, I am not against a flirtation, only I don't want to take the initiative." And when, soon after, a young officer of the line[1] took to visiting her, mamma called him "the officer with the initiative." And what a nuisance he was to them! He spat and coughed and smoked cigarette after cigarette, and the worst possible cigarettes too, while the widow, in a languishing voice, sang about

"The night, and love, and the moon."

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[1] Officers of the line rank lower in social position than officers of the guards.

Mamma used to listen to their conversations; the balconies were only divided by a canvas partition.

"Haven't you anything to read to me?" asked the widow; "it's so dull. Lend me some book, only not a love story, please. . . . Are there any such books?"

"Of course there are. Have you read any of Gleb Ouspensky's[1] books?"

"Gleb? No. Are they good?"

"Well, you must read them. I'll bring them to you."

"Bring them; yes, do bring them."

And they read Gleb Ouspensky together, afterwards they read Schopenhauer. And mamma, sitting with her work on her own balcony, laughed to herself, thinking, "Read on, read on; evidently, tout chemin mène à Rome."

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[1] A realistic author, who chiefly wrote sketches of peasant life.

When the officer was tired of reading he put the book down on the table and lit a cigarette.

"How true, how true it all is!" said the widow, gazing pensively towards Beshtau. "I look on life just as Schopenhauer does. There is nothing that can bear being analysed without being dispersed like smoke. Truly, life is not worth living."

"Yes, certainly life is a pretty considerable muddle. But still, for all that, why not try and live without analysing and reflecting about everything?"

"No, once you know that life is worthless, it's not worth while living."

"No, it's worth trying just for the sake of being convinced."

"But if you know beforehand it's not worth while?"

"But why isn't it worth while? Why,

Schopenhauer himself went through it all before writing about it."

"But then, what sort of a life did he live? Well, yes, he found out that everything is falsehood, fancy, and vanity, that we deceive ourselves. And we all come to the same conclusion. Is it worth while wasting strength to come to a result already known, even though it be only known from books?"

"Well, you take a very high-flown view. I look on things much more simply."

"Why are we wasting the time in talking? Go on reading, go on!" . . .

Of course this was all very ridiculous, and Mimotchka would never have allowed herself to be as silly as the widow. Peuh! She felt so happy and bright, and yet without any love-making whatever. An officer of her husband's division rode with her and introduced his friends to her.

They all admired and liked her. She could easily have got to know *l'homme au chien.* But she herself did not wish to. After all, what was the good of it? Mimotchka, like Vava, chiefly delighted in the feeling of her freedom, and in the absence of all restraint and guardianship. Here mamma did not bother her, and did not accompany her on her walks. She would have liked to have done so, but the burning Caucasian sun prevented her. Mamma could not stand heat. In the morning, after seeing the young people off, and, like Providence, arranging everything for their comfort, mamma, when they had gone, closed the shutters, pulled down the blinds, and, having made it dark and cool, lay down on her bed with a book. In thought she was, of course, with her poor, sick children, who were broiling in the sun. She felt quite comfortable about Mimotchka, but Vava gave her considerable uneasiness. Vava was like fire, so impulsive, so impressionable (those slim girls were always so *passionnées*), and here, besides, there was something in the very air of the place, the burning sun. . . . And yet Vava was so bright, so nice, so much improved in her looks, and so contented with everything. . . . Supposing there was some secret reason for all this.

And mamma got frightened, very much frightened. And in the stillness of the night, more than once, the images of the student and the military cadet flew over her pillowed head like two demons come to trouble her sleep and disturb her rest. After much consideration and preparation mamma tried to caution Vava. Vava only answered her warnings with a look, but such a look that mamma's soul sunk into her shoes, and she inwardly determined never again to revert to the subject. In order to quiet her conscience, however, and relieve herself of all responsibility towards Julia, she called the maid Katia, and ordered her to look strictly after her young lady and let her know with whom she walked, where she went, and whether she was ever alone with anyone.

And Katia, after having ironed Mimotchka's petticoats and laid out everything that would be required for the evening, went out into the park, with the firm intention of looking after her young lady. But as her young lady was very much on the move, and running after her was very tiring, Katia wisely sat down on a bench under the shade of a spreading tree, which Vava must certainly pass on her way home to dinner, and sat there watching the people going by.

Opposite the bench, on a little eminence, stood some hawkers with glass cases, an Italian selling corals and mosaics, and some Armenians with Caucasian wares. Among them was a small Armenian with cunning little eyes, an enormous nose, and a high black cap. And standing by his glass case, in which were displayed Caucasian turquoises and oxidised silver things, belts, daggers, brooches, and pins, all bearing the inscription, " Kavkas, Kavkas, Kavkas," he looked at Katia so knowingly and so expressively, just as if he knew how she was deceiving her mistress.

Three days running Katia sat on the same bench, and the Armenian walked round his wares and shot killing glances at her, while his eyes seemed to grow still narrower and his nose still bigger. But Katia pretended not to notice anything, and drew figures on the gravel with her parasol. Then he spoke to her. She was passing him and looking across at Beshtau, when he said, " How hot it is! Why do you go out walking at this time? It's not pleasant walking now. The evening is the time for going out. It's not hot in the evening; it's nice then." Katia still pretended not to hear, and went up in the direction of the mountain, coquettishly swinging her parasol. Then he began to bow to her. Then Katia bowed in return, at first gravely, and afterwards with a smile. Finally, he tried to persuade her to buy something.

" Your prices are too high," said Katia; " they're not for my pocket."

" But you must know them first, and then say. . . . I'll not ask too high. . . . You look at the things and ask the prices."

So Katia began examining and choosing the things in his glass case. In a week's time she already knew all the things in his show-case by heart; she knew his name, how old he was, that he had a cousin in Petersburg in a Caucasian wine-shop, and that he himself would also come to Petersburg; she also heard all about Tiflis and Kislovodsk, heard that it was a great deal pleasanter in the park in the evening than in the daytime, and that it was so dark, so very dark! Katia learnt all this, but as yet she did not choose anything out of his glass case, but postponed doing so until she got to Kislovodsk.

Meanwhile Vava, who had aroused such black suspicions in mamma's mind, sat quietly at the gymnasium with her friend the governess, and, unable to contain herself any longer, unfolded to her her project of a home for destitute children. The governess sympathised with her idea, but did not quite believe in the possibility of its realisation, and, shaking her head, smiled incredulously.

"It's all very nice," she said, when Vava had finished, "but it will never come to anything. You will marry and bring up your own children, which will be a great deal better."

"In what way?"

"It will be more natural. It's impossible to love strange children like your own."

"But they won't be strange children, because they will be mine almost from the day of their birth."

"For all that, it's not the same. Of course I can't judge from my own experience; but every one says so, and I think it must be so myself. A strange child can never be the same as your own. I know it wouldn't be to me."

"But I could love a strange child like

my own. . . . How not to love them? One pities them so, poor little forsaken, innocent things; and if you love out of pity, you love better and stronger."

"No—anyhow there is something unnatural about it. I should understand if you were unhappy, or had been disappointed in your own personal happiness, then it would be all very well; but why imagine all this when you have still the possibility of being happy?"

"Yes, but then I can only be happy in that way."

During this time Mimotchka was sitting by herself in the summer-house by the Bishop's Palace, reading *La Grande Marnière.* Her reading did not advance much. The book did not interest her, and she read over the same page several times. In the summer-house, besides her, were seated two priests and some nurses with children, and although their conversation was uninteresting, still it amused her; and Mimotchka did not care to move, because it was pleasanter and cooler here than anywhere else.

The priests got up and, as they went out, knocked up against *l'homme au chien*, who was just entering the summer-house with his dog. The young man walked up to the railings, and, resting his elbows on them, gazed into the distance. Mimotchka became absorbed in her reading. The nurses, after looking at the newcomer, resumed their conversation.

"Why are there so many priests here?"

"They've all got something or other the matter with them. Lenten fare is bad for their insides. That's why they all drink this mud water. It's a very good water, this muddy kind is. Our folks drink it." . . .

"And ours, too, began by drinking it. But now they drink the Bariatinski spring. Only my lady was too lazy to go herself in the morning to the spring, and always sent me to fetch the muddy water for her; and so I had to go, although it's a good way off. Now they drink Bariatinski water."

"Then your lady is making a cure herself?"

"No—all our people are. The young lady, and the master, and the mistress."

"And are they really ill, or is it only from too good living?"

"No, it's not exactly from too good living, but it's just as the Lord sends it. The master isn't quite right in his head. Yes, at one time he really was shut up in a madhouse. He threw himself into the water and tried, so to say, to make away with himself. Well, now he's better.

Kousmitch cured him. Now he is able to go about by himself. He takes the waters, too—and afterwards we shall go to the Crimea. Now there is not much the matter with him. . . ."

"Out of his mind? Why, what a dreadful thing!"

"Yes, indeed; Heaven preserve us from it! It was awful what we had to put up with in the house! Kousmitch cured him, though."

"And your young lady—how about her?"

"Nothing much. She's a poor frightened thing, very thin, and has pimples on her face. She's a quiet enough young lady; there's no harm in her. We had a young man after her at one time—yes, a real one, a military man, too, in a uniform. . . . Only he got hold of part of the dowry in advance and went after someone else. And she fretted and fretted—she's all right now—Kousmitch did her good."

"And your lady herself?"

"The mistress was dreadfully bad. You can see for yourself how yellow she is. Well, this winter she suffered from her liver, and the winter before last she was even worse. What a lot of doctors and nurses she had!—and she was ill the whole time, and couldn't walk because she had something the matter with her inside. Yes; what a lot of money we did spend! First one doctor comes and attends her, then we hear of another, a more expensive one, and then we try him. Well, he comes and prescribes for her, and then somebody tells us of another still more expensive one, and so we call him in. And we had prayers put up and icons brought in from the church. And it was all no good at all. And in the spring, when we were coming to the Caucasus, I said, says I, 'Mistress, little mother,[1] which way are we going? Aren't we going past Samara?' says I. 'We are going by steamer up the Volga, and shall pass Samara,' says she. (And I come from Samara, from the district of Bousoulouk.) 'Well,' says I, 'little mother, you do as you like, but if you want to do the master good as well as yourself and get God to give you both your health again, you go and see Kousmitch (for in our part lives Kousmitch, who is worth all the doctors in the world; he comes of peasant stock, but princes and generals and lots of gentlefolk go to him to be cured, because he cures all those that the doctors can't cure). So you go to him, little mother,' says I. 'It's God Himself that's sending you to Samara.' 'Be quiet, nurse,' they say. 'You don't understand anything about it. What's all this about your Kousmitch? You do as you're told and go to the chemist's.' 'Very well,' says I; 'what do I care? I'll go.' And then, when we're sailing down the Volga and come to Samara, my lady comes up to me and says, 'Look here,' says she, 'nurse, don't tell anybody, but we're going to Kousmitch.' (You must know my people are merchants, and very rich ones, too; they have five houses in the Kalashnikoffskaia Pristan,[1] but they're shy of gentlefolks.) Says I, 'Well, what of it? Why should I tell anyone? I won't say anything about it. You go if you like to. Who should I tell? I won't say anything about it.' So they went to him, to the little father, Kousmitch. And he, the little father—he can see right into everybody, and he cured them both. First he looked at the master, took him by the hand, and felt his arm down from the shoulder. Doctors only take hold of your wrist and count by their watch, but he, the little father, feels over the whole arm down from the shoulder and finds out the illness without any watch at all. And he said to the master, 'You,' says he, 'have rheumatic swellings. Don't be afraid; you'll get well—drink!' And he gave him a bottle of stuff directly. Yes! And to the mistress he said, 'It's just your liver that's wrong. And there's something the matter inside as well,' says he; 'it's a bad business. You,' says he, 'take care, because, if you don't take care, you'll die. Yes! you must keep lying down,' says he—

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[1] The terms "little mother" and "little father" are used by the lower classes in Russia as a mark of respect.

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[1] A quarter of St. Petersburg, up the Neva, where all the granaries are situated.

'yes, lie down often; then you'll get better; and here's this for you—drink!' And he gave her another bottle. Our young lady didn't want to show herself to him; she laughed and said, 'What does a peasant like him understand?' But he, the little father, said, 'What are you laughing at? You had a young man,' says he, 'but he ran off.' The little father knew all about it, you see. 'Don't be afraid; you'll find another. You've got money, haven't you?' says he. 'She has, little father,' said we; 'how shouldn't she have, with five houses on the Kalashnikoffskaia Pristan?' 'Well,' says he, 'it's all right. You'll be married and get quite well; and, meanwhile, here's this for you—drink!' And he gave her another bottle, and he told the children to drink too; and I says to him, says I, 'My back aches, little father.' And he gave me a bottle of stuff too. 'Drink,' says he, 'old woman.' Well, and so we all drink."

"And does it do you good?"

"It does us good. In the morning, when we get up, we drink some of his stuff before eating anything. We don't say anything about it to the doctor. And at first the mistress drank the muddy water, and now she drinks Bariatinski water. And all the stuff they bring us from the chemist's we throw away, because Kousmitch said it was all no good; and if the mistress feels worse, she gives up drinking the waters, and only takes what Kousmitch gave her. It's a decoction of peppermint." . . .

"Peppermint is a good thing. But for my part I drink nothing but Michailovsky water here. That's what I like. It's such a fresh-tasted water."

"But is it good for healthy people to drink? I don't drink any of the waters. I am afraid. You might get some illness from drinking them."

"No, it's all right enough. They're not good enough for fat people to drink, but for thin, full-blooded ones, there's no harm to be got, only good."

"I'd drink them too if I wasn't afraid.". . .

"What is there to be afraid of? Let's come and have some at once. Where have my little rascals got to? Vania, Vassia, come here! We're going to the gymnastics."

The nurses got up and went out of the summer-house, leading away their charges. Mimotchka and *l'homme au chien* were left alone together. Mimotchka turned over the leaves without raising her eyes from her book. He sat down so as to have a sideway view of her, and taking out a newspaper also began reading. They both felt each other's presence and proximity, and also felt that if they were to throw aside their reading and begin talking it would be pleasant and amusing; but they did not speak to each other. He did not dare; she did not wish to. Now and then Mimotchka raised her blue eyes and fixed them on the blue distance. He sat secretly admiring her, the way her hair was done, the tip of her little foot, and all her young, fresh, elegant person. . . . Mimotchka felt he was looking at her, and rather maliciously thought to herself, "Aha! so it's not only actresses that are pretty?" Then he put away his newspaper, took out his oxidised silver cigar-case, and asked her permission to smoke. Mimotchka signified her consent by an inclination of the head. Then she was suddenly seized with a panic. He would speak to her directly. What could she answer? And what would it lead to? Up till now it had all been so nice and interesting, and now it would all be spoilt. If he spoke to her like he would to a cocotte, she would be offended. She was a general's wife and a respectable woman. She didn't like being spoken to by people she didn't know. And Mimotchka shut up her book, got up, and walked out of the summer-house with her light, graceful walk. And he looked after her and whistled "Azra." Nothing more happened. But Mimotchka felt so light-hearted, so very light-hearted. And although she would very much have liked to go back to him, she went home without once looking round.

All three ladies met at dinner in the best of spirits. They dined amicably and gaily, laughing at the unappetising dishes (at the everlasting mutton they were so tired of), and praising and doing honour to mamma's successful cookery; for she had not only prepared cutlets and beefsteaks but had artfully managed even pastry, jelly, and *compôte* besides.

Katia picked the caterpillars and insects off Vava; Mimotchka examined her face in the looking-glass, wiping off the specks of dust, while mamma informed them of the results of her observations of her neighbours. These surrounding love affairs revolted mamma, but still they excited and interested her. In spite of the heroines being only bakers' or farmers' wives, mamma almost twisted her neck in following out their progress. . . . Katia, while modestly serving the dinner, completed mamma's stories with information she had gathered from private sources of her own.

"Now, it's all clear to me," said mamma, catching her breath in her excitement, and speaking of a doctor's wife in their street. "Le mari sait tout . . . c'est clair comme le jour. . . . What things one does see and hear!" . . .

After dinner Mimotchka and Vava went off again, while mamma, without hurrying, dressed herself in Petersburg fashion, wiped the perspiration off her face, powdered it lightly, and having thus smartened herself up, went to the Kursaal, where she read the newspapers, after which she sat on the verandah with an old dignitary from Petersburg, who was suffering from a gastric and liver affection, and played picquet with him.

Towards the end of July, in the latter

days of the month, when in our northern climes the mountain ash berries already begin to get red and fill with juice, while at Jeleznovodsk piles of apricots and peaches make their appearance on the swarthy fruit-sellers' trays, one beautiful morning two unknown ladies came up to Mimotchka and asked her, on behalf of the other residents in the town of Jeleznovodsk, to take part in a charitable *fête*, got up for the benefit of a home for poor children. Mimotchka gave her consent. She had often held stalls at charitable bazaars in Petersburg, and it was even one of her favourite distractions.

And on the appointed day Mimotchka, in a most exquisite peach-blossom coloured dress, stood behind a table, decorated with green garlands and flags, and sold tea. In a line with her Baroness Benkenstein in blue and Mdme. Tchereshneff in red, and two other ladies belonging to the "cream" of Jeleznovodsk society, one in white and the other in a crushed strawberry dress, sold pastry, fruit, and sweets.

At the other end of the square were tables at which the actresses, with the fat Mdlle. Borissow at their head, sold tickets for raffles.

Mamma and the officer from Spiridon Ivanovitch's division helped Mimotchka pour out and sell tea; Doctor Variashski helped Mdme. Tchereshneff, and *l'homme au chien* was the baroness's *aide.* Mimotchka saw that now she could not well avoid making acquaintance with him, but this time the prospect did not alarm her. The baroness and she had already spoken to each other at the baths, so that when they met here they at once bowed to each other. . . . Mimotchka liked the baroness.

She was a little bit eccentric, but very nice. Besides which, *elle était bien née et bien apparentée*, which mamma thought a great deal of. The baroness had come to Jeleznovodsk with her husband, who had spent five days there and gone on further, leaving his wife to make a cure. And she drank the waters, gathering around her a circle of lively young people, in which *l'homme au chien* did not play the smallest *rôle*. At the *fête* mamma was a great deal more talkative and sociable than Mimotchka; she and the baroness made acquaintance, and followed it up by mutual invitations, and in the meanwhile he, *l'homme au chien*, was introduced to Mimotchka.

How pretty and graceful Mimi was that evening, how she smiled, counting over the money and giving change! Somehow it happened, quite by itself, that *he* became her helper, and the officer went over to the baroness. It was so easy, so simple to talk to him, not like Variashski, who always seemed to be laughing at everything. By way of a beginning Mimotchka asked him, "Are you in the Caucasus for the first time?" She always said that to everyone. Oh no, it was already the fourth summer that he had come here, as if it were merely going out of town. Four years ago he had come here ill, sad, and weary, with a heavy burden on his soul, and here he had found calm and healing. . . . Since then . . . And their conversation flowed on easily and freely. Mimotchka was of a silent nature, and difficult to get on with, but he could talk for two, and both question and answer. And she only listened, smiled, shook her head, and following his talk, raised her Madonna-like eyes to his with such a speaking look in them that he became still more animated and more eloquent. And meanwhile mamma, looking at him sideways through her eyeglass, found out all about him. Had the baroness known him before? Of course she had! She had known him a long time, he was a great friend of her husband's. He was a barrister from Kieff, and a rich man, that is to say, he was married to the daughter of a rich Kieff manufacturer and landowner. His wife was a charming person, but rather unsociable and serious. She went out very little because she was so occupied with her children, but they were received in the best society. Now his wife was with the children on their estates, but he came here every summer to take the waters. He was in every way a most correct person. . . . And mamma, hearing all this, and nodding her head, invited

Valerian Nicolaevitch, *l'homme au chien*, to come and see them.

The bazaar was over. The receipts were splendid, and the ladies of the *beau-monde* had realised fifteen roubles more than the ladies of the *demi-monde*. Mdme. Tchèreshneff was particularly proud of this. The baroness was tired, and said she felt half dead. . . . Mimotchka was in the highest spirits. How much better and stronger she had got!

She even went afterwards with mamma and Valerian Nicolaevitch to the dance in the evening at Tchichvadze's Hotel. Of course she didn't dance herself, but she sat and looked on at the others dancing. Valerian Nicolaevitch sat by her and indulged in a great many witticisms at the expense of the dancers. And by general desire Prince Djoumardjidze, Princess Ardjivanidze, and Prince Kakoushadze danced the Lesginka.[1] Outside on the balcony, a Caucasian lieutenant, who had drunk too much Kachetinsk, got very excited, drew out his dagger, and threatened to cut the hotel-keeper's throat because he had given him a tough fowl for dinner. All the rooms at Tchichvadze's were pervaded by an odour of burnt fat and the fumes of cooking. Doctor Babanine, in a Tcherkesk costume with a *nagaiki*[2] in his hand, circulated among his patients, making up a party for an evening ride to Mount Beshtau. The musicians in their high fur caps and beautiful white costumes piped the Lesginka with all their might, and to its irritating strains Princess Ardjivanidze fluttered about amidst the vapour of kitchen fumes.

Mamma got so excited that she decided on having a regular jollification. In accordance with her desire Valerian Nicolaevitch ordered Kachetinsk and champagne to be served to the ladies with *shashlik* and *tchihirtma*.[1] They sat down to supper.

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[1] The Caucasian national dance.

[2] A Tcherkesk riding-whip.

"The Caucasus is before me," . . . declaimed Valerian Nicolaevitch, pouring out Mimotchka a glass of Kachetinsk, and she caught up a little bit of burnt mutton on the end of her fork and said, smilingly:

"Mais c'est excellent, le *shashlik !*"

Valerian Nicolaevitch saw the ladies home. It was a beautiful evening. A full moon had risen in the heavens, flooding the white houses and slumbering gardens with her tender light. . . . On bidding good-bye mamma renewed her invitation to him to call on them.

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[1] Fowl prepared in Caucasian fashion with lemon and rice.

Mimotchka still smiled a long while after she had got home. Mamma had an unpleasant remembrance of the *shashlik* she had eaten, and looked about for her little bottle of nux vomica. And Mimotchka began curling her fringe, and while she curled it, went on thinking of him, and recalling his face and his glances. How all the women, and his wife among them, must admire him! What kind of a wife has he? . . . Why isn't she with him? Perhaps she is a horrid, ugly thing. . . . Or, she may be lovely. . . . What had he said to her? How beautifully, how intelligently, how easily he talks! . . . She doesn't know anyone who talks so well. And how perfectly at ease she feels with him! What a nice man he is! And how well everything has turned out. They had made acquaintance in such a proper sort of way.

She had not sought his acquaintance, she had not lost her womanly dignity. . . . Everything had happened by itself. It was a pity they had exchanged glances on the journey. It would have been better if it hadn't happened. But still these are only trifles, and he has evidently forgotten all about it. . . . Oh, he is so very correct! He would never forget what was due to himself and to her, and of course she would never allow him to.

How nice it was that they had made acquaintance! Perhaps they would form a true, pure friendship. He was just the sort of friend she wanted! . . . She likes him. . . . And then he is so intelligent. He is exactly what she requires. . . . She has no friend or companion suitable to her age, clever, interesting in conversation, and also perfectly honourable and correct. . . . And isn't he honourable and correct? A few more such people and she would have a sympathetic little circle of her own, in which it would be so pleasant and delightful to rest her soul from the bitterness and oppression that her ill-assorted marriage had left in her heart. Ill-assorted? Of course it was ill-assorted. And naturally such a circle would only consist of honourable and correct people. She does not require any wild gaiety. She does not want to be as giddy as Nettie. Heaven preserve her from becoming such a *tapageuse!* She would never tread a perilous path. She does not want anything wrong. She only wishes to have friends, honourable, nice people, whom she could meet and converse with about the things that interest her. She has already found one such friend. He is married and she is married. They are neither of them free, so that nothing can interfere with their friendly intercourse. How nice it is that they have made acquaintance!

"What is he doing now?" thought Mimotchka, twisting up the twelfth and last curl-paper before her looking-glass. "Is he thinking of me? What does he think of me?" . . .

And after undressing and blowing out the candle Mimotchka laid her pretty head, crowned with its row of curl-papers, on the pillow. . . . But somehow the thoughts and curl-papers got entangled with each other and prevented her sleeping. . . . What is he thinking of? what is he doing? . . .

And Valerian Nicolaevitch, having returned to his hotel, sat by Prince Kakoushadze, whose acquaintance he had made only the day before, and pouring himself out some Kachetinsk, said:

"Well, now at last I have made acquaintance with my general's wife. She does not particularly shine by her intelligence, but in her eyes there is a boundless sea. And her hand, her foot! . . ."

And Valerian Nicolaevitch blew an airy kiss in Mimotchka's direction.

The next day they went on horseback to Karass. The riding party consisted of ten persons, but Mimotchka and he rode together, and there were moments when they were left quite alone. He talked even more than the day before. Where did he get it all from? And how lightly he passed from one subject to another. Mimotchka asked him if he had had his dog long. And straight after answering her question he passed on to love. And it flowed on and on. . . .

He said that life without love was wearisome, was like a desert without water, that a woman lives by love alone, that without it she struggles like a fish thrown on the dry sand, that woman's nature is demoralised and distorted by the absurd education given her, that women of their own free will lay on themselves chains and fetters, under the weight of which they afterwards almost sink. And if anyone were now to tell them that the end of the world, the end of life, would come to-morrow, and that the whole edifice of prejudices and conventional ideas would be broken down, they would throw aside their mask, lay bare their real feelings and desires, and speak in a real living tongue. . . . The pent-up waters would burst through the dikes. . . . And he quoted now a verse from Heine, and then a verse from Byron, . . . here a Latin citation, there a couplet from an operetta.

Love moves the world. Love is the flower of life, its perfume, its fragrance. Love is the crown, the cupola on the edifice of human happiness. . . . How beautifully Musset has said . . . And Schiller, in speaking of . . . And Beaudelaire, and Setchenoff, and Fett, and King Solomon, and Dranmore, and Kousma Proutkoff.[1] . . . Let the reader select what he likes from this poetical chaos!

Mimotchka's horse shook its ears, and Mimotchka herself put back her hair, which had blown forward from under her hat, and looked as lovely as the Caucasian sun itself.

They rode on side by side through a little path in the wood. The green boughs were close over their heads, and he held them up with his hand while she bent her head down low. In front of them they could hear the sound of the horses' hoofs and the laughter and talk of the baroness and her companions.

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[1] Fett, a Russian poet; Kousma Proutkoff, a Russian philosophical writer in the style of La Rochefoucauld; Setchenoff, a Russian author.

An unexpected storm overtook them in the wood. Mimotchka was generally afraid of storms, but with him she did not feel afraid, only excited and gay. The rain poured down and the whole cavalcade galloped on furiously. He had his *bourka*[1] with him, which he threw over Mimotchka's shoulders. When they arrived at Karass they all took refuge in a barn to shelter themselves from the rain. The storm went on. The lightning flashed among the mountains, and the thunder pealed over the heads of the drenched riding party. They were all in high spirits, and animated by the rapidity of their ride :

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[1] Caucasian cloak, made of hairy cloth.

the baroness in particular was quite in ecstasies, and considered her picnic party a great success. The servants set tables and benches in the barn, prepared the *samovar* and unpacked the provisions and wine. . . . They all sat down to tea. Presently Doctor Babanine's party, also all wet through, galloped up to the barn. The baroness invited them to join her tea-party. The company united, and they all became still livelier. And Mimotchka threw off the cloak and drank some cognac that Valerian Nicolaevitch poured out for her. He brought her her tea, and waited on her and entertained her, and she was so amused and happy that she even left off lamenting that her hair had got out of curl.

When the storm was over and the moon rose up in the sky, the party distributed themselves in three boats and went for a row on the lake. Somebody sang and the baroness rowed. Doctor Babanine, in his Tcherkesk costume and with a *nagaika* in his hand, swam across the lake on horseback. And they returned home very, very late. Mimotchka was tired, but she did not regret having gone. And how delicious the air was after the storm! What a night! What a moon!

And then began a series of bright, cloudless days. In the morning, when she got up, Mimotchka already knew that she would meet him almost immediately. And, in fact, they met at the morning music. And once they were together—it was all right, that was the chief thing, all the rest was of secondary importance. They had established a pleasant, friendly intercourse together, in which there was nothing, nothing whatever to find fault with.

They met, walked together, talked, and made fun of the baroness and her friends. He related to her episodes of the baroness's past life, then he told her what he had done since he had last seen her, whom he had met and what he had thought about, and then they talked over how they would spend the evening: whether they would ride or go to the concert. If there was nothing to talk about, he talked about love, declaimed Fett, Musset, or Byron, but never permitted himself to speak presonally, and of course she would never have allowed him to do so. Mimotchka knew which of her dresses, and which way of doing her hair he liked best, and she did her best to please him. She caressed Rex, and Valerian Nicolaevitch, on his part, showed himself well disposed and gracious to the pug. He gave Mimotchka some valuable advice on the subject of dress. He had a delicate and elegant taste, and knew a great deal about laces and the blending of colours. In general he was able to teach Mimotchka a great, very great deal.

They were both fond of music, and did not miss a single concert. And when Mimotchka, sitting by his side, listened to the songs, it seemed to her that it was not at all the same music she had heard during the winter sitting by the side of Spiridon Ivanovitch in the Salle de la Noblesse in Petersburg. Either the singer here sang a great deal better than Figner,[1] or else she had got so much better and stronger that everything appeared to her in another light; but anyhow it was quite, quite different music. Mamma rarely appeared at the concerts: the expense, for one thing, deterred her (for mamma was stingy to herself), and besides, somebody must stay with Vava, who liked to go to bed early and couldn't bear the *kursaal*. So Mimotchka went to the concerts alone with Valerian Nicolaevitch. After spending the evening in the rooms, they walked home together. He gave her his arm and in a low voice sang over some of the melodies they had just heard. And she raised her Madonna-like eyes to the stars and then turned them back to him, and their eyes met and said something that their lips did not dare say, because he would never, never have allowed himself to, and she would never have permitted it.

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[1] A famous Russian tenor.

They were happy. And everything that surrounded Mimotchka, everything that she saw and heard, the dark mountains and the green woods, and the glimmering of the stars and the moonlight, the noise of the horses' hoofs, the rustling of the branches, the talking of the crowd, the songs that the singers sang, the chirping of the crickets—all this was the scenery and orchestra to that new, sweet song that the voice of nature itself was singing to her.

She never thought of analysing her own feelings, she would not have known how to. There was nothing to alarm herself about. Nothing had happened. It was simply that acquaintance and intercourse with such a clever, charming man gave her pleasure. Now there was someone with whom she never, never felt dull! And Mimotchka said to Vava:

"I have never yet met such a clever, highly educated man. How well he speaks French, English, and German! What intelligence, what a memory! You can talk with him the whole day and hardly notice how the time passes."

Vava didn't like him; but then what did a stupid girl like her understand? And besides, mamma both liked and admired Valerian Nicolaevitch, and often said to Mimotchka:

"Isn't Valerian Nicolaevitch coming to see us to-day? Ask him to come and have a cup of tea."

And Valerian Nicolaevitch came and drank his tea and patiently listened to mamma's stories, and was so chivalrously respectful to Mimotchka that mamma could hardly refrain from embracing him. Mamma thought him very handsome; she considered him even handsomer than the hussar Anutin, who had made such a sensation at the Mineral Waters.

And the maid Katia, buttoning the boots on Mimotchka's little feet, said, as she dexterously used her buttonhook, "What a nice gentleman he is! how I do like him! The chambermaid, Dasha, who knows his man, says, too, that he is such a nice gentleman. They have their own house in Kieff. And they say he is such a good master." . . .

"Oh yes," thought Mimotchka, "and then the chief thing is, he is so clever!"

At night, when she went to bed, she tried to remember what he had said to her. It was difficult, because he talked so much. But what she remembered perfectly well were his glances. How he had looked at her when they had turned back to Griasnoushka, and then, when he sang "Azra," and she asked him for the words of it. Oh, what eyes he has, what eyes! It's a good thing that he has so much respect for her, because, if he had not, she would be afraid for herself. Now, of course, she is quite easy. She already knows him quite well enough to feel assured that he would never allow himself . . . She is a respectable woman, she isn't like Nettie. She likes him as a friend. . . . If she were free, perhaps she might like him in another way. Of course, if she had known him, she would never have chosen anyone else. . . . But she is not free, and only likes him as a friend. It's so nice, such a friendship ! . . .

And in the darkness Mimotchka opened her eyes and imagined how it would be in the future. He liked her. By degrees he would let himself be carried away by his feelings, and he would love her, love her so much that he would follow her to Petersburg. And he would suffer from her cruelty, poor, dear fellow ! would endure everything, and at last would explain himself. And she herself would suffer too, but she would say to him: " And I love you too, have loved you a long while, but duty and my obligations to others . . . We must part." And so they would part, poor things! How they would suffer! But still it was impossible to do otherwise . . . And Mimotchka sighed and turned over her pillow and put the displaced sheet straight again. In the room, in spite of the door being open on to the balcony, it was close and hot. And next door the indefatigable widow was singing:

> " And the night, and love, and the moon."

And the officer, who had taken the initiative, coughed and yawned loudly.

" They won't let you get to sleep, they're intolerable! I'll shut that door directly," said mamma, getting up, and, lowering her voice to a whisper, so as not to wake the sleeping Vava, she added, " Just imagine what I saw to-day; they kissed before me. So, *pour tout de bon*. . . . I went out on the balcony to shake a petticoat, and they were sitting there kissing. . . . Schopenhauer lay on the table and they were kissing. How disgusting!"

One day followed another without bringing any great changes. Mimotchka's cure was drawing to a close, and mamma had already put a mark in her almanac against the day fixed for their removal to Kislovodsk.

Vava went on with her cure, walked, read, and talked, and argued till she was hoarse with her new friends about the immortality of the soul, about the woman's question, and about the thoughts and looks of Leo Tolstoi.

Mimotchka was without a care, and flirted gaily with Valerian Nicolaevitch.

Her maid Katia flirted no less gaily with David Georgevitch, and mamma played at picquet with the bilious dignitary from Petersburg, or craned her neck watching other people's love affairs. And both Vava and Mimotchka improved in health and looks every day, so that mamma, joyfully noticing this, said to her partner :

" How fond people are of praising up everything foreign and running down their own country. What things they told us about the Caucasus ! And yet how my young people have improved here ! If you had only seen my daughter in the spring. . . . She looked like a ghost ! We were afraid she would go into a consumption. Do you know, our waters are better than those abroad."

The old gentleman did not even smile, but, dealing the cards with his bony fingers, he contradicted mamma. He could not take upon himself to give any opinion about ladies' illnesses—it was beyond the sphere of his competence. . . . Perhaps the ladies had improved in health, perhaps . . . But in regard to his fellow-men he would venture to say that here it was only the healthy that improved. The doctors improved; yes, those robbers certainly improved their circumstances. . . . A set of clowns who couldn't distinguish one illness from another (the old gentleman had already changed doctors four times, and acknowledged to mamma that he couldn't digest a fifth). They went about courting and flirting and riding on horseback like madmen, while the invalids had to put up with every discomfort. What was the Government about? They took bribes and commissions under the inspector's very nose. It was all robbery, pillage, and disorder. . . . Wait a bit!

. . . If the fifth doctor did not kill him, he would write an article about them under the title of "Our watering-places and our doctors." And they would recognise themselves, they would recognise themselves. . . . Wait a bit! . . .

Mamma smiled good-humouredly and indulgently as she sorted her cards. What was the use of arguing with a man who was a martyr to his liver and stomach! How could he digest his doctor when he couldn't digest his dinner? . . . And with her sweetest smile, and in a voice that mamma knew how to make softer than almond oil, she said to him: "But do you know what I would advise you to try?—a simple, but well-known remedy. My son-in-law suffered for years from the most obstinate catarrh; and he made a cure and took the waters. But do you know what did him good? I'll tell you.

Just a pinch on the end of a knife." . . . And so on.

It was a hot, very hot day. Mimotchka, on coming from the baths, went up on the mountain and sat down on a bench where she generally rested after her bath. She wore a light cambric dress, and yet could hardly breathe. The heat acted unpleasantly on her nerves; besides which, she had something on her mind. The day before they had had a quarrel, and now she felt ashamed and vexed with herself. He had been angry with her yesterday, and had said that he would not go on to Kislovodsk, but would go straight from Jeleznovodsk to the baroness's country place, where he had been invited to stay. He was angry because Mimotchka would not go out riding with him alone, and had said that it would look "awkward!"

Oh, what a fool she was, what a fool! Now she would gladly give half her life to get back that word. How coarse and stupid it was! She had showed that she was afraid. And what was there to be afraid of? Hadn't she gone out riding alone with Variashski, and with the officer of Spiridon Ivanovitch's division? didn't the baroness ride alone with *him*, with Valerian Nicolaevitch? And what of it? Was anyone shocked by it? Not in the least. Awkward, awkward! . . . Oh, what a fool she was! And what must he think of her now? Good heavens, what could she do to please him? Now they would part coldly and inimically, and if he ever after thought of her, it would be as a fool and an idiot. But no, it was impossible, surely they would not part so?

Here he comes. He came up to her with a solemn, dignified expression of countenance, and saluted her coldly. Then he talked of the weather, and, having asked her permission to sit down beside her, seated himself at the further end of the bench. Oh, what a chill seemed to come from his elegant person! The top of Mount Elbrouz itself couldn't be colder. And Mimotchka's hands and feet grew cold from the proximity of this Elbrouz, and she felt ready to cry.

And yet the sun was hot, and the air burning and close. Nature seemed exhausted with the heat. The cracked, parched earth prayed to the heavens for rain; the splendidly grown trees stood morosely and lazily; not a leaf stirred; on every rock from below and above the grasshoppers chirped loudly.

The conversation flagged. Mimotchka was dreadfully ashamed. She felt that she had lost her dignity as a general's wife, and tormented herself trying to think what she could say.

Valerian Nicolaevitch silently enjoyed her agitation and trouble. It was not only Mimotchka's appearance that pleased him, but her very silentness and slowness of comprehension. What a good listener she was! In Valerian Nicolaevitch's eyes this was a most precious quality, because he liked to be the only one to talk. How tired he was of those talkative women, with their pretensions to wit and intelligence, who had read a little, would chatter about something, interrupt without listening to what you were saying, cavil at your ideas and catch up your words. . . . How different Mimotchka was! What a depth of womanliness there was in her. She possessed what the poet calls "das ewig Weibliche." . . . She was not clever, certainly; but this very want of cleverness was so pleasing in her. And why should she be clever? What would it add to that pure, limpid look in her eyes? She had both tact and grace. And although she was not clever, still she had a very charming manner, not too free and yet not too shy. She was very, very charming, and he had not been so taken with anyone for a long time. He intended that the *dénouement* should take place at Kislovodsk, and yesterday evening, according to his programme, a preliminary *tête-à-tête* ride should have taken place in order to reassure Mimotchka, and quiet her alarm, as he saw that, in spite of everything, she was still on her guard. . . . And then suddenly she wouldn't go. Just think of it! So that's the way, is it? Very well! Now she must be punished, and made to ask him to come to Kislovodsk.

And so he sat there by her, gazing

mournfully and coldly before him, and cutting off the tops of the grass with his stick. The conversation flagged. . . .

The sister of the actress, Mdlle. Lenskaia, passed close by them. A little old man, thawing under the influences of beauty, like a candle under the rays of the Caucasian sun, was giving her his arm.

Mimotchka began talking about her. The Lenskis interested her very much, because she had long been jealous of them on Valerian Nicolaevitch's account, and she often asked him about them. He, according to the humour he was in, either lauded them to the skies or trampled them in the mud. This time Mdlle. Lenskaia turned up at a very lucky moment for herself. Valerian Nicolaevitch began extolling her. There was a real woman for you. She was worthy of bearing the high and holy name of woman. . . . She lived herself and gave fresh life to those around her. . . . Like the sun, she shed light and warmth on all those who drew breath in her presence. . . . In her old age, when she drew near her end, her conscience would not reproach her in any way. She would have fulfilled her earthly task. She would have lived and loved. . . . She is no mere dressmaker's dummy, only made for trying on Parisian toilettes, she is a living creature, with warm blood running in her veins, with nerves vibrating in her, and life brimming over within her. . . . She is not a puppet whose strings are pulled by public opinion. . . . And he poured forth a flood of stern and terrible philippics against the women of society, those egotists, those hard-hearted, empty-headed coquettes. . . . A nice education they have given them! Their mothers impregnate them with their absurd morality with as much zeal as they lay camphor in their carpets and shawls to keep away the moth. And they attain their object. The moth does not touch their shawls, and passion does not come near their well-brought-up daughters. But the atmosphere that surrounds them is hard to breathe in. A man feels half suffocated. He feels dull in their presence. . . . Yes, intolerably dull. . . . And is it surprising that men flee from them to such women as Lenskaia?

Mimotchka was ready to cry. He was dull with her. . . . He had always felt dull in her society. . . . She was only a dressmaker's dummy for trying on dresses. . . . He would leave her and go to Lenskaia. For shame, for shame! . . . And he continued thundering against the women of society, interlarding his speech with verses and quotations. Love moves the world. There are women unworthy of the happiness of love, unworthy of high and holy moments. A woman incapable of love is like the foolish virgin without oil. . . . And the Lord will say to her, "Depart, I know you not." . . . Watch. . . . Yes. . . . And old age will come, terrible, merciless old age, with its grey hairs and wrinkles, and will seize upon the heart with its cold hand, and the heart will quail with fear and will thirst for life, but it will be late, too late. . . . And then came a verse from Musset, and then one from Fett.

Valerian Nicolaevitch got more and more excited by his own eloquence. Lowering his voice now to a whisper, and now raising it, he never glanced at Mimotchka, never even turned towards her, but looked straight before him as if addressing the gentlemen of the jury. And it seemed to Mimotchka that the grasshoppers and black trunks of the trees, which played the part of jury, said with one voice, "Guilty, guilty, and not deserving extenuating circumstances."

Mimotchka knew she was guilty, but she really did not know how to set things right, nor what to do to stop his anger and make him come to Kislovodsk. She looked up at him. How handsome he was! He took off his hat, and she saw his white forehead, his wavy hair, and his brilliant eyes. . . . She felt drawn towards him, and yet was afraid of vexing him. . . . What can she say? good heavens, what can she say? . . . And she hung her head lower and lower, and drew figures on the sand with her parasol, while he went on saying those dreadful things.

Some ugly-looking Armenian women, in their muslin veils, went past and gazed stupidly at poor Mimotchka with their round black eyes. The passers-by smiled knowingly, and looked back at Mimotchka with a low whistle. . . .

And Valerian Nicolaevitch continued to thunder on like an inspired prophet.

Women do not wish, and do not understand how to be intelligent. When the sun shines on them, when the heavens smile on them, they pull down the blinds. . . . Everything is only play, amusement, and a joke to them. Not one them of knows how to raise herself to the height of a serious feeling. . . . Flirts, who don't deserve that a man with a soul should waste his time and lose his heart for them. . . . Well did Heine say . . . And what a bitter truth Byron wrote . . . and Montesquieu, that great jurist. . . . Mimotchka finally gave up trying to understand altogether. Great men's names always bewildered her. Her lips trembled, she would have liked to cry. And why does he scream at her here so, where so many people are passing, and when she cannot say anything for fear she will burst into tears?

Taking advantage of a momentary silence, Mimotchka got up and said:

"I think it is time for me to go home." He bowed coldly and politely. "Aren't you going to see me home?"

"If you desire it."

And they came down the mountain. He played with his stick; Mimotchka looked on the ground, and Rex walked lazily after them, wagging his tail, and wondering they were not tired of such stupid talk.

"When are you going to Kislovodsk?" asked Valerian Nicolaevitch.

"To-morrow. And you?" and Mimotchka looked up at him with the tenderest, most beseeching look.

"I am not going there at all."

There was a silence.

"Why are you in such a hurry to get home?" began Mimotchka again.

"I am not going home. I think I already told you that the baroness had asked me to come and stay at their place. . . . The baron is an old school friend of mine, and I shall be glad to see him again! And she is such a charming woman too. . . ."

And again they went on in silence. Mimotchka was struggling with herself, not knowing whether to ask him to come to Kislovodsk or not. If she asks him what reason shall she give for asking him to come, and how will he take it? And if she doesn't ask him he won't come. No, she will ask him, she will ask him. But still she was undecided, and said:

"I wish you would say some verses to me."

"Some verses? Certainly."

He plucked a flower from the wayside and began declaiming:

> "Elle était belle, si la nuit
> Qui dort dans la sombre chapelle," . . .

and so on. When he had pronounced the last words with great effect, they had reached the door of the house, where mamma was waiting dinner for Mimotchka, but still she did not ask him to come to Kislovodsk. She remarked that it was yet early, and that very likely Vava hadn't returned, so they might as well take another turn. Valerian Nicolaevitch offered her his arm, and they went on a little further, then they came back and passed the house on the other side of the way. After a little while Mimotchka spoke, and when they stopped at the door for the third time, and mamma had warmed up the soup on the kerosene stove for the second time, everything that was necessary had been said. He had promised to come to Kislovodsk for a month (that is, for the whole time that she would be there), and she had promised to go out riding with him the first evening they were there. Why did he so hold to it? Well, anyhow it didn't matter? They had made it up.

Both Vava and Mimotchka had passed the time so agreeably at Jeleznovodsk, and liked it so much, that when they came to Kislovodsk they refused to admire anything, but stood out that Jeleznovodsk was a great deal nicer. Vava said that Jeleznovodsk was dark, green, and warm, while Kislovodsk was light, blue, and cold; and Mimotchka said she had a crooked looking-glass, and that her bed was a great deal harder than the one at Jeleznovodsk. Besides this, there were a good many of their Petersburg acquaintances at Kislovodsk—Princess X——, with her daughter and niece, General Baraeff, a friend of Spiridon Ivanovitch's, and others besides. . . . Now they would get sick of them and their gossip, and good-bye to the freedom of Jeleznovodsk!

However, Vava and Mimotchka were soon reassured on that score. The princess seemed hardly to move from her place at the card-table, her daughter had captured a little *aide-de-camp* with the object of leading him to the altar, her cousin was romantically and hopelessly in love with a very pale and very interesting gentleman, whose wife had run away from him, and who was making a cure at Kislovodsk, while General Baraeff was incessantly after a pretty widow, with whom he intended to go for a trip across the Caucasus. In fact, they all seemed quite taken up with themselves and their own amusements. The young princess and her cousin met Mimotchka and Vava very amiably and with transports of friendliness, but it was clear that they had not the slightest intention of profiting by their society, and were only anxious not to be interfered with in their walks and excursions. And both Mimotchka and Vava breathed freely again. The latter's entire circle of friends had assembled at Kislovodsk, excepting the student, who had gone with the Morozoffs to the Crimea. Vava welcomed them joyfully, and the day after their arrival the whole party undertook the ascent of the Krestoff mountain, the view from which so delighted Vava that in two or three days' time she began to like Kislovodsk better than Jeleznovodsk. And it really was better. Here there were silvery birch-trees, murmuring mountain streams, and, above all, the wonderful pure air, intoxicating and invigorating all who breathed it. And then, here there was more variety, it was more Eastern, more Caucasian.

Mamma accepted with pleasure the princess's offer to occupy the fourth place at her card-table, the former player having left for the Crimea. Vint was one of mamma's passions, and was a great deal more interesting than picquet with the bilious, irritable dignitary from Petersburg.

On the fourth day after their arrival Mimotchka put on a white dress and a red hat and went with Vava to the park. They both still drank koumiss, and went to the koumiss establishment to drink it. Passing through the colonnade they met Valerian Nicolaevitch, but a transformed Valerian Nicolaevitch! In a Tcherkesk costume, wearing a *beshmet*,[1] a *papaha*, and with daggers stuck in his belt. And what a splendid *djigit*[2] he made! Tall, well built, and black browed! It was a surprise for Mimotchka. Rex walked majestically after his master.

"Isn't it odd?" said Valerian Nicolaevitch to the ladies as he greeted them; "I always bring this costume with me, but at the beginning of the season at Jeleznovodsk I haven't the courage to put it on. But here I already venture to wear the national dress, and all the more so because I am almost always on horseback. The environs are so lovely! Have you been anywhere yet?"

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[1] *Beshmet*, a Tartar tunic; *papaha*, a high sheepskin cap.

[2] *Djigit*, a Circassian rider who performs feats of horsemanship.

"Nowhere. With whom should I go?"

"How glad I am! The environs are so beautiful! And I so much wanted to show you my favourite places myself. Then shall we go for a ride today?"

"Let us go. Have you spoken about the horses?"

"Of course I have. Our horses are here, so we shall not have to look about for fresh ones. Osman came on with them yesterday."

When they had drunk their koumiss, Mimotchka and Vava carried off Valerian Nicolaevitch to speak to mamma, who was playing cards out of doors. Mamma was delighted to see him, and introduced him to the princess, who examined him through her eyeglass when he had moved from their table, and also thought him handsomer than the hussar Anutin.

And Valerian Nicolaevitch and Mimotchka went on to the end of the principal walk, losing Vava, who met some of her friends, on the way. Mimotchka was radiant. It was as if there had never been any quarrel between them; they were again on the old, pleasant, friendly footing. Mimotchka herself had hardly expected she would be so glad of it. Yes, he was more necessary to her than anyone. Life did not seem the same thing to her with him as with others. And he was so bright, so contented, so glad. Why was he glad? Because he was with her, of course. Was not that the reason why she was so glad! So glad, so glad! Ah, how happy she was!

After dinner Mimotchka lay down to rest a little. But she could not sleep, only lay there and rejoiced at his having come. How could she possibly sleep now? It rested her only to think of him. Could the presence, the vicinity of any other person bring such joy, such light into her life? Well, now he is here. And again they will be together amongst a crowd of strangers. That is all she wants. To be together, and to be young and lovely for him and through him. Because, for instance, the reason why she looks so well to-day is that he has come. The joy of it beautifies her. Oh, how she loves him! She never, never felt so before. And the chief thing is that there is nothing wrong in it. How can that be wrong which awakens the best part of her soul? She fears nothing, nothing. . . . Is it possible that she really loves him? Well, what if she does? She cannot hold back her heart nor stop it; how it beats! . . . Of course he will never know. She will never allow him to, and he would never permit himself . . . What does it matter if she loves him? The purest and most honourable woman may be carried away by her feelings. . . . And in spite of it she may have the strength to remain honest. . . . They are going out riding, and again there will be a whole evening for them together, they two alone! How beautiful! How beautiful!

Then she began to dress. . . . Never in her life had her toilet been so successful. Her hair seemed to arrange itself on her head, the buttoned-up habit bodice set like a glove, and when Mimotchka, having scented her handkerchief and taken her riding-whip from Katia's hands, threw a last glance at herself in the mirror, there looked out at her from it such an angelic, poetical little face, with shining eyes and a happy smile, that she almost blew a kiss to her own image. The horses were already brought round. He was seated on horseback, and talking to mamma through the window.

" Please, Valerian Nicolaevitch, do see that she doesn't ride too fast and too far. Any over fatigue is so bad for her, and she has got so venturesome and careless lately. . . . After all it's not long since her recovery. Do look after her. I give her into your charge."

" Be quite easy, Anna Arcadievna."

Mimotchka came down the steps and sprang lightly into the saddle ; she smiled up at mamma and rode off beside Valerian Nicolaevitch, with Osman following a little behind them. And mamma looked after them and thought to herself : " What a fine-looking couple they make ! If we lived in Arcadia instead of Petersburg that would have been the sort of husband to have. Still, everything is for the best. A man like that wouldn't have married her, but would have looked out for money, and after marriage would only have amused himself and deceived her. . . . Les beaux maris ne sont pas les meilleurs. . . . And you can always find as many admirers as you like, but a husband like Spiridon Ivanovitch is not picked up every day." . . .

And mamma meditatively returned to her *coiffure*, for she was going to see the princess. But where has Vava gone? "Where's your young lady?" she asked Katia.

"She was here a minute ago."

"A minute ago! I ask you where she is *now?* What are you thinking of, pray? What do you receive wages for from Julia Arcadievna? You were told not to leave your young lady alone for a minute. Go and find her directly!"

Katia listened submissively to mamma, and after she had put together Mimotchka's scattered petticoats and hairpins, she did her hair, scented herself with Mimotchka's eau de toilette, put on a little grey jacket and a hat with a wing at the side, and hurried off to the park, where, at the end of a shady walk, she met David Georgevitch, who was waiting for her, and who had already presented her with a Caucasian brooch and two turquoise rings.

After leaving Kislovodsk, Valerian Nicolaevitch and Mimotchka rode along the country road. Sometimes they went along slowly and sometimes galloped. (Valerian Nicolaevitch only rode at the kind of pace that pleased Mimotchka; *he* was not like Variashksi!) At the first pause he began talking about horses, and told Mimotchka what kind of horses he had at Kieff and what kind on his estate. Afterwards, crossing the fords, they remembered Petchorin and Princess Mary,[1] and he talked about Lermontoff and literature. . . . It was just the same to Mimotchka on what subject she kept silence as long as she could listen to him. Then he began to speak of nature. And she, did she care about nature? Oh yes! (Mimotchka forgot that she had previously only cared about nature somewhere round a bandstand.) It seemed to her then that she loved and always had loved nature. Didn't she like cantering over this green steppe, that waved about like a sea? Didn't she admire the delicate outline of the chain of mountains that bordered the horizon? Oh yes, she loves nature. She had not known anything about it before. In Petersburg and Paris you only see nature in pictures at exhibitions. . . .

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[1] The hero and heroine of a novel, by Lermontoff, called a *Hero of our Times*, and in which the scene is laid in the Caucasus.

In the midst of their peaceful chat they met a carriage in which were seated General Baraeff and the widow. The general bowed amiably to Mimotchka, who nodded to him in return. Valerian Nicolaevitch began making fun of the general.

" It's Baraeff, a friend of my husband's," said Mimotchka.

When she mentioned her husband a shadow always passed over Valerian Nicolaevitch's face. Mimotchka was already aware of this, and was sorry she had mentioned him so *mal à propos.* They became silent, and pushed on their horses as if the recollection of poor Spiridon

Ivanovitch obliged them to hasten to the object of their excursion.

" Where are we going to-day ? " asked Mimotchka, when the horses got tired and fell back into a walking pace.

" We are going to-day to the ' Castle of Love and Treachery.' "

" A castle ? Is there really a castle there ? "

" No, there is no castle whatever ; but there are rocks, very picturesquely situated rocks. . . . It's a lovely spot. . . . And there is a legend connected with the rocks. If it won't bore you to listen, I will tell you the legend."

" On the contrary, I should very much like to hear it."

" Well then, listen. A certain merchant had a daughter—of course she was young and beautiful."

" Why ' of course ' ? "

"Because otherwise she would not be worth talking about. Well, this daughter loved a youth, also young and beautiful. The young people loved each other as it is only possible to love under such a sun and amidst such scenery. (Probably you won't understand this, mais passons.) Well, the young people loved each other, but, as is generally the case, fate and circumstances were against them. The father of the girl rejected the suit of the enamoured youth, who was poor, and found another bridegroom for his daughter, a rich merchant like himself. The young people tried to overcome his objections, but he was inexorable; so they decided to die. One beautiful morning they came to these rocks—you will see them directly—stood at the edge of the abyss, so as to throw themselves down and be dashed to pieces on the stones, and said good-bye to each other—good-bye to life, to light, and to nature. 'Throw yourself down!' said the girl, 'and I will after you.' He smiled at her, threw himself into the gulf below, and was killed. And she . . ."

"And she?"

"She went back home and married the rich merchant!"

"Oh, what an . . ."

"Artful one, wasn't she? She married the merchant and the rocks kept the secret of his love and her treachery. Look—they are already visible, do you see? More to the left. . . . But we can go down there below." . . .

"Then you have been here before?" . . .

"Oh, more than once! But never in such charming company." . . .

"What's that? un compliment?"

"No, I am not joking. Do you know,

I love these rocks, this wild, picturesque spot, where every pathway, every stone awakens in me so many feelings and thoughts that have nothing in common with my dull, grey, everyday life. . . . And whenever I was here before, I always thought how beautiful it would be to come with some charming, poetical creature—in fact, to come as I have come to-day. And when I go home I shall say, 'Now let thy servant depart in peace!'" . . .

The idea passed through Mimotchka's head: "Is he going to allow himself to?" . . . But no, he had already begun talking again about the horses. Then they were both silent. They had to get down below by a steep, narrow path. Osman rode on in front, to show the way.

It had got dark. The moon had not yet made her appearance.

"This doesn't look much like a moonlight night. You said there would be a moon."

"Wait a little, only wait. There will be a moon."

"But we shan't see anything down there."

Mimotchka began to get alarmed at the darkness.

"Why shan't we see anything? Don't you see the rocks? How beautiful that pass is! And the moon will come out directly."

"Yes, but while we are waiting for the moon it will get late, and when shall we get back?"

"Late? What does it matter if it is late? It will be as light as day for us to ride back when the moon is up. You are not going anywhere this evening, are you?"

"No, I am not going anywhere, but mamma will be uneasy."

"She won't be uneasy, because she knows you are with me. And why think of going back when it is so beautiful here? But women never do understand how to enjoy the present moment. I pity them! Then you don't care for it here? I thought you were more sensitive to the beauties of nature. . . . Look at these rocks, at that sky, at those stars. . . . Do you remember those lines of Musset—

'J'aime! voilà le mot que la nature entière
Crie au vent qui l'emporte, à l'oiseau qui le suit!
Sombre et dernier soupir que poussera la terre
Quand elle tombera dans l'éternelle nuit;
Oh! vous le murmurez dans vos sphères sacrées,
Etoiles du matin, ce mot triste et charmant!
La plus faible de vous, quand Dieu vous a crées,
A voulu traverser les plaines éthérées,
Pour chercher le soleil, son immortel amant.
Elle s'est élancée au sein des nuits profondes.
Mais une autre l'aimait elle-même; et les mondes
Se sont mis en voyage autour du firmament.'

How beautiful they are, aren't they? I

am sorry I can't see your face. I should like to know if you look as you always do."

"And how do I always look?"

"Cold, severe. . . . Like a general's wife."

"A general's wife? Naturally, I look what I am."

"Don't calumniate yourself. You are a woman. You should look like a woman, such a woman as stood there on the top of those rocks, wavering between sacrifice and treachery."

"But I don't in the least wish to resemble her."

"Why?"

"Because she behaved odiously."

"Perfidiously, yes, but she acted like a woman, a weak, false woman. And that is what pleases me. I like weakness in women. I don't care about strong-minded women—heroines. Let those who will sing their praises, I shall never be among their admirers. Strength of mind is as little suited to a woman as physical strength. A woman should be all weakness, all love, all tenderness. Let her weakness make her false. What does it matter as long as she is charming! . . . But you, how would you have acted in her place? Imagine that you are in love with someone—well, say, for instance, with me. I hope that such a supposition made in joke won't offend you. Imagine, then, that you are in love with me, here, now, as you are, in your present position."

"In my present position? . . . I think that if I were in love with you, I should endeavour that you should never find it out."

"And why so?"

"Because I am married, I am not free."

"La belle raison!"

" Comment, ce n'est pas une raison ? . . . What would you say if your wife . . ."

At the mention of Spiridon Ivanovitch, Valerian Nicolaevitch had frowned ; at the mention of his wife a bored, weary expression overspread his countenance. Mimotchka knew the expression well, and she always rejoiced at it. Although she had heard from the baroness that his wife was a charming woman, still it was more agreeable to her to think that she was dull, unsuited to him, and as little wanted as Spiridon Ivanovitch himself. If he were happy with her, he would not come away from her, and would not have such a pale, weary looking face and sunken cheeks, would he ? . . . No ; he was probably unhappy and suffering, and only did not complain because he was too proud. Poor dear ! . . .

Meanwhile they had got down to the

pass, and Valerian Nicolaevitch proposed to Mimotchka to dismount and walk to a place from where he considered the view of the rocks to be even finer. Osman led away the horses, and they made their way over the stones by the side of a murmuring mountain stream. A high, perpendicular rock rose behind them like a menacing wall. It seemed to Mimotchka as if she were descending into the bowels of the earth, or as if she were at the bottom of a deep well. The steppe across which they had galloped was so high above her head, and the sky, on which the long-expected moon had at last appeared, illuminating the rocks and their picturesque verdure, seemed so far off.

"Well, how do you like it?" . . .

"C'est féerique," murmured Mimotchka —"c'est féerique!" And what stillness, what utter stillness! No; decidedly she is somewhere not on the earth. And for an instant, for the last time, the disquieting thought came into Mimotchka's head, Had she done right to come here? He had asked her to come, but perhaps he would have had a better opinion of her if she had not come. But, no; what nonsense! What harm is there? Everybody comes here to admire nature, and she has also come to admire nature. It's no use to come to the Caucasus and not visit its picturesque parts. Otherwise afterwards, when she looks at photographs, she will find that she has not seen anything. Why doesn't Vava ride on horseback? She might have come with them. And what harm is there in her having come here alone with him? If she were to have gone with him to some restaurant now, that would have been dreadful! (But of course she would never have gone with him.) And they have only come here to admire nature. Yes, and besides, after all, they have the Tartar groom with them. Somewhere in the distance she can hear a horse neighing; those are their horses and Osman.

And, having quieted her conscience by such reflections, Mimotchka repeated, "C'est féerique!" . . . And she sincerely admired the picturesque rocks, and Valerian Nicolaevitch sincerely admired her.

"You are not tired?" asked he, spreading out his cloak upon the ground. "Sit down; I am sorry that I have already told you the legend about the poor youth who was killed here. I ought to have told you it now, here, in view of the rocks. . . . Well, I must tell you something else."

Decidedly Mimotchka was no longer on earth. It was impossible that that could be the same moon that shone on Spiridon

Ivanovitch and baby. That was somewhere far away, but this was quite a different moon so benignly protecting them. And what a soft, languorous, magic light she sheds over that little corner where they are alone together and so far from the crowds of people, from the noise and the world. . . .

How quiet it is, how quiet! . . . What moments of full, perfect, unalloyed happiness! If one could only fall asleep here, die, and never awake again, never come back to life. And he was with her, near her, and gazing at her as her humble, faithful slave, as her devoted friend.

And for the first time in her life Mimotchka no longer thought if she was looking pretty or not, nor how she was dressed, nor what her aunts would say of her. She felt somehow strange, as if she were neither asleep nor awake. She had never experienced anything like it before. And her breathing was oppressed. For some moments she was afraid she was going to faint.

A stone fell and they both started. He drew still nearer to her. Were you frightened? Is that really him? Yes; those are his eyes shining. How pale he is! And how pale the moon is! What is it all—a dream or a reality? And Mimotchka, wishing to break through this fearful, oppressive silence and to get the better of the numbness overpowering her, repeated again, "C'est féerique, c'est féerique!"

And really there was something fairy-like, something extraordinary about the evening. And the most extraordinary thing of all was that Valerian Nicolaevitch took Mimotchka into his arms and kissed her—kissed her eyes, her lips, and her hair. How did it happen? How could he allow himself to, and how could she permit it? . . . Oh, "Castle of Love and Treachery!" Then he told her, in a caressing whisper, that it must have happened. Well, of course, once it had happened, probably it must have happened. But anyhow they must go home now quick, quick! . . . And when he put her into the saddle, he said to her, "My darling! My beautiful darling!" . . . And she, helplessly putting her hair straight, said, "Il fait tard, il fait tard!" But she looked more radiantly beautiful than Spiridon Ivanovitch had ever seen her look, in spite of the fact of his commanding a division and having a whole division under his supervision.

They must ride back fast, very fast; but Mimotchka had somehow lost her riding-whip on the mountain. Osman and Valerian Nicolaevitch ran back to find it. They found the whip, and all three set off furiously across the steppe, now flooded by the moonlight.

The lights of Kislovodsk were shining when they rode up the long alley of poplars. From the chief hotel came the sounds of a waltz. Mamma was looking out for her daughter, sitting at the open window and getting uneasy.

"Here you are at last!" said she. "I was getting afraid that something had happened to you, that you had been attacked. . . . Well, what? Are you tired?" . . .

"Yes; we hurried back so."

"Come in, Valerian Nicolaevitch, come in and have some tea."

Valerian Nicolaevitch thanked her, but refused. He had promised to go to a party somewhere. And when he had helped Mimotchka down from the saddle, he came to the gate with her, and whispered to her, "À demain!" and, with a look and a pressure of the hand, thanked her for going with him.

When she came in, Mimotchka refused tea and all refreshment, but went straight into her own room and hurriedly began undressing. She did not want to see anyone; and having put out the candle, she laid her radiant face on the pillow. How had it happened? She had no feeling either of repentance or of shame. She only felt happy and peaceful. This—fall, this—terrible step; it was a stain that could not be effaced; it was—a sin, she thought to herself; but how easy it had been to commit it! Maintenant c'est fini, elle est une femme perdue! And her husband? . . . But she mustn't think about it—no, she must not; better think about *him:* Val! Val! . . . And Mimotchka went off to sleep soundly and tranquilly, as only happy people with a pure and easy conscience sleep.

In the morning they met under the verandah of the Kursaal. There was only a month left before they returned to Petersburg, and how much there was to talk over, how much for them to say to each other. They had to tell each other how they had fallen in love at sight, at their very first meeting, even then, at Rostoff. . . . Un coup de foudre! . . . How afterwards they had remembered each other, looked out for each other, and been jealous of each other, until they met again and became acquainted. . . . And how everything had happened as it must have done. They had to tell each other that they had always waited for each other, that they had foreseen this, and now were bound to each other for all eternity. Oui, c'est pour la vie, c'est pour la vie! . . . And principally they had to arrange about the time and place of their meetings.

He lived alone, and by taking proper precautions Mimotchka might come to his rooms. This would be the most convenient way. He would not have proposed it to her if there had been any risk, for Mimotchka's honour and good name were above all things dear to him. And Mimotchka, having reconnoitred and assured herself that "Maman ne se doute de rein," and that she and Princess X—— and all their circle were completely taken with the hussar Anutin and his intended bride, was tranquillised, and, taking all due precautions, came to his rooms.

How she enjoyed being there! Everything that surrounded him and that he used bore the stamp of his exquisite taste. Mimotchka turned over his letter-case, his albums, and looked at the portraits of his wife and children. . . . His wife was a great deal too handsome, and excited her jealousy, but Valerian Nicolaevitch pacified her: "Handsome? . . . Yes; she is handsome, but that is not sufficient. Une femme doit plaire. That is the chief thing." His wife was not suited to him. A cold, lifeless beauty; a soulless creature, a blue-stocking, a second Lady Byron. . . . She was a mother, only a mother, not a woman to love. She lived for the children, and expected him to do the same. It was absurd. The children would live and enjoy life themselves some day. And meanwhile he wishes to enjoy his life. Another life will not be granted to him. He must live, live. . . .

And he kissed Mimotchka, kissed her

eyes, and said, "Let me drink of this sea!"

Mimotchka was not aware before that there was a sea in her eyes.

Having got over her jealousy, Mimotchka hid the photograph of his wife further on in the book, so that it should not meet her eyes, and went on turning over his things.

Valerian Nicolaevitch had forty neckties and forty pairs of socks, and for each necktie there were socks to match. And what a lot of *breloques*, pins, and rings besides, which he varied, also selecting them to match the neckties. In general, he was rather a dandy, but Mimotchka liked it. She looked over and arranged the forty neckties in a rosewood box, separating one necktie from the other with a sachet of his favourite perfume, "Cherry-blossom." And she told him which neckties she liked, and which she didn't like, and which he was to wear the next day. And one necktie she called the necktie of "Love and Treachery." That was her favourite. Occasionally, chiefly on the days she received letters from Spiridon Ivanovitch, Mimotchka had a fit of the "blue devils," as she called it, and she reproached herself for her guilt towards her husband. "Je suis une femme perdue," she said. "Anyhow, I have wronged him, injured him. . . . And he has in nowise deserved it. And what will happen if he gets to know? He will kill me or turn me out of the house . . . Enfin je suis une femme perdue. And you yourself must despise me. Yes, you despise me, Val; I see you do." . . .

"What a child you are!" And he tried to convince her that there was nothing to despise her for. "On vit comme on peut.

Look at the people we know; look at Marie Pétrovna; look at Marie Lvovna!" . . .

Mimotchka reflected and remembered. Certainly, there was both Marie Pétrovna and Marie Lvovna. And Nettie, above all! But then, on the other hand, there was Anna Vassilievna, and Aunt Julia, and mamma. No, there were still some honest, good women, not like her. Otherwise, why such harsh, pitiless judgments, why so much hypocrisy in the world? . . . Valerian Nicolaevitch explained it all to her.

"Don't you see, people suffer and bear too much because they don't seize the moments of happiness that fall to their share."

"Oh yes, people do suffer."

And she told him all about Spiridon Ivanovitch, and how dull it was for her with him. She was rather afraid that Val would despise her for having an old husband—he had so thundered against mercenary love. But no, it did not disturb him at all. In general, since the ride to the "Castle of Love and Treachery," his feelings towards Spiridon Ivanovitch had quite changed. He did not even frown when Mimotchka mentioned his name, but, on the contrary, he endeavoured to instil into her that with such a husband she could lead a very pleasant, easy life. Only she must be wise. And he proceeded to give her some advice.

In the winter he would come to Petersburg. His wife would remain at Kieff with the children, and they would spend a beautiful winter together. Only there must be no imprudences. He praised Mimotchka because while she was here she had behaved so rightly, so quietly, and so naturally. Neither her mamma, who loved her so tenderly, nor that sharp girl, Vava, had noticed anything whatever. That was as it should be: yes, just as it should be. They loved one another, and they must set up a wall between themselves and the world. Their secret was the wall behind which they could love each other boldly and fully. They must hide their happiness like a treasure, like something precious.

"L'amourette que l'on ébruite
Est un rosier déraciné."

Let people try and guess if they chose to, let them suspect what they liked, but don't let them know anything.

Mimotchka told him how she came to marry, how everybody had persuaded her to, and how she could never have made up her mind to it by herself. Valerian Nicolaevitch did not understand why. It was wise, and she had acted very rightly. Money was not the last thing in life; if it was not happiness, at anyrate it was the key to happiness. Only, these last four years she had not understood how to arrange her life. She herself had made it dull. Everything depends on ourselves.

But up till now she had not cared for anyone. She had never loved before, and if she had not met him, Val, here, she would never have known the happiness of love. But now, c'est pour la vie, n'est-ce-pas ?

" Oui, c'est pour la vie ! "

He himself seemed to be deeply unhappy in his family life. His wife was a cold, hard pedant, who was incapable of responding to the transports of his ardent soul. She was *une femelle ;* yes, that was the word. Why had he married her ? . . . It was a long story. Some day he would tell it to Mimotchka, afterwards, but meanwhile . . . " Let me drink of this sea ! " . . . And he kissed her eyes.

For the first two weeks he told Mimotchka that he should certainly come to Petersburg, and they talked about the delightful evenings they would spend together at theatres and concerts. They would meet every day. But as the time of separation drew near these plans somewhat changed.

He received a business letter from Kieff. It appeared he would hardly be able to get away to Petersburg. An affair was impending, an important, complicated lawsuit, with the particulars of which he made Mimotchka acquainted. He was to defend a celebrated thief, a regular scoundrel.

" But why defend a scoundrel ? " asked Mimotchka ; " then you don't think him guilty ? "

" I am convinced of his guilt ! "

" And you would defend him *quand même ?* "

"Every man has a right to a defence. It's easy enough to acquit an innocent man. His innocence itself speaks for him. But to pardon a guilty man, to turn to him indulgently and mercifully, as a Christian should turn to his brother, whoever he is, much intelligence and much knowledge of the human heart is required. Christ did not judge, Christ justified all, and for this very reason, and to awaken in the juries' hearts that divine spark which exists in everyone of us . . ."

"But surely they won't acquit him ?"

"Perhaps they will."

"What, a good-for-nothing fellow like that ! I would transport him with hard labour. And because of him we shan't see each other any more. How I hate him ! And yet you are going to defend him." . . . And Mimotchka began to cry.

"What a child you are!" said Valerian Nicolaevitch, and kissed her eyes.

"Then we shan't see each other any more?"

"What can we do? . . . Fate is jealous." . . .

And when, three days before their departure, Mimotchka cried bitterly on his shoulder, he stroked her hair and said rather absently:

"What can we do? We must submit. We were happy. . . . Fate is jealous. . . . Voyons, du courage. . . . We must look the inevitable in the face. . . . Let us be thankful to Providence for these bright moments. You are still so young. . . .

'You will know new feelings
And choose new friends.'"

"Jamais, jamais. . . . How can you talk like that! Don't you care if I get to love someone else? Tu ne m'as jamais aimée! . . . Oh, Val, Val!"

"Enfant! voyons, ne pleurez donc pas. . . . What does it matter? I have had the spring flowers, someone else will have the fruits. . . . Don't look so terrified! . . . Je connais la vie, voilà tout! . . . You're not angry with me? . . . No! . . . Let me kiss your eyes! How I love kissing them! . . . Fate willed it otherwise. . . . We have gathered the flowers."

And then came a verse from Heine and a verse from Fett.

"I shall not forget you; no, never, and do you remember too,

'Rappelle-toi, lorsque l'aurore craintive.'" . . .

But Mimotchka only went on crying quietly and silently, shaking her head and kissing his hands, while her copious tears dropped like hail on the necktie of "Love and Treachery."

Then they exchanged turquoise rings. Mimotchka had her photograph done for him in her riding-habit, on the same horse on which she had ridden to the "Castle of Love and Treachery," and he had his done for her in his Tcherkesk costume. They had very much wished to visit the "Castle" again, but somehow something always hindered their doing so. . . .

Meanwhile mamma was already packing up and scolding Katia, who seemed bereft of her senses, forgetting orders, letting things drop out of her hands, and packing heavy garments on the top of light ones.

Vava tied up the copybooks containing her impressions of her travels and her projects of a home for destitute children, and wrote down the addresses of her Caucasian friends.

And Katia, on her knees before the open trunk, spread tissue paper over Mimotchka's plush jacket, and from time to time big tears dropped on the jacket and on the linen laid over it. Oh, those Caucasian turquoises! . . .

Early in the morning a travelling carriage stood at the door of Baranoffsky's apartments. Vava shook hands warmly with her friends, who had come to say good-bye to her. She had very much improved during the summer, had got sunburnt, stouter, and stronger. She had spent a lovely summer here, and how sorry she was to part from those blue mountains, from those walks and little paths in the wood, and from her good friends! Ah, how sorry, how sorry! And Vava, forgetting all about her mother's strictness and home regulations, and her previous unsuccessful attempts to introduce her friends, invited them all—yes, all—to come and see her—please—be sure to—as soon as any one of them came to Petersburg! She would be so happy! . . . "Don't forget, No. 5 Millionnaia, apartment 2. . . . Please do be sure to come!"

Mimotchka came out in a travelling hat, in a waterproof, with a travelling bag on her arm, and muffled up in a thick gauze veil. She was calm and composed. She had cried away all her tears the day before.

Valerian Nicolaevitch was kind enough to offer to accompany them on horseback as far as Essentouki. He was in his Tcherkesk costume, leaning picturesquely on his saddle, and humming a song of Kapri's, "I remember the blissful meetings." . . .

Katia ran out with bandboxes in her

hands, weeping and panting. . . . Mamma stared at her in amazement. Everything was put in, everything was in its place. The ladies took their seats and the carriage drove off from Kislovodsk.

They said good-bye at Essentouki. Valerian Nicolaevitch kissed mamma's hand, and she expressed the hope that he would come and see them in Petersburg. Vava also invited him to come and see her. She was so sorry that everything Caucasian was leaving her. Mimotchka was silent, but gazed at him mournfully.

And the carriage drove on further in the direction of the station.

It was a grey, dull-looking morning, and a thick, fine rain beat against the windows when the ladies woke up as they neared Petersburg.

Rain, rain, rain. . . . A melancholy grey sky. . . . The villas round Petersburg with their fir-tree plantations; the muddy, swampy roads with the ditches at the edge and the thickly-grown bracken pass before them. . . . Moss, bilberry bushes, marsh and fog. . . .

Here are the well-known market-gardens with the cabbages, and the barracks, and the platform of the Petersburg railway station; the rain has stopped and the sun is shining on the wet platform.

There is Spiridon Ivanovitch's orderly and there is Aunt Julia's footman.

And here stands Spiridon Ivanovitch himself, resplendent, like a peony, in his crimson-lined overcoat. . . . Mamma joyfully taps on the window-pane to him. He has seen them, seen them and recognised them!

Mimotchka's heart sinks. How old he

looks, and what a stranger he seems to her, what a stranger! . . . She wishes the train would not stop, but would go on further and further and carry her away past. . . . But the train slackens speed, it stops. They must get out.

Here's Mdme. Lambert with Zina, and, oh my goodness, here's baby with his nurse! He has come to meet his mamma! How he has grown, how he has improved, and how sunburnt he has got, dear little mite! And just look, he isn't a bit shy; he smiles, he says, "how-do-you-do" to them all, stretches out his lips to be kissed by his mother and grandmother and Vava. . . . And he salutes, yes, he has learnt how to make a military salute, putting up his little hand to his head and saying, "I wish you good health!" Oh, what a darling!

And grandmamma smothers baby with

kisses, and tears of pride and tenderness rise to her eyes, when baby, drawing himself up straight in front of her, says to her, "I wish you good health, your excellency!" And Spiridon Ivanovitch enfolds Mimotchka in his ample embrace.

A week after their arrival they were all assembled at Aunt Julia's. She was in a state of great jubiliation. Her son Vova was engaged, and his *fiancée* was in every way most suitable. She was both wealthy and well connected. . . . The engagement was not yet formally announced, but the affair was quite settled. The *fiancée* was not pretty and she was no longer very young, but she was over head and ears in love with Vova. Aunt Julia liked her very much, and in speaking to her sisters of the young lady she said: "Elle n'est pas futile."

Aunt Julia thanked mamma very warmly for her care of Vava. Not to speak of Vava's having much improved physically, she had also morally changed for the better; she was more self-controlled, gentler, and more obedient. And so she was given a separate room all to herself, where she could sleep, write, and study without Mdme. Lambert.

"Well, so altogether you had a pleasant trip?" says Aunt Julia in conclusion.

"Delightful, delightful. I am so glad Variashski sent us there."

"But how much prettier Mimotchka has grown! Why, she is simply unrecognisable."

"It's striking!" says Aunt Mary. "Next summer I shall go to Kislovodsk to get young and beautiful again."

Mimotchka smiles modestly and composedly.

"And that Netty!" says Aunt Sophy. "Haven't you heard what a scandal there was?"

"No, what is it? Zina wrote something or other about it, but we could not make out what she meant."

"She is separated from her husband, and has now disappeared from Petersburg and gone off to Paris, where she changes her lovers as often as her gloves. It's awful! She always did behave like a fool. Just before her husband had to go to sea her conscience began to get uneasy. If it had only kept quiet until he came back! No, she goes to confession and tells everything to the priest, this and that, and says she has committed a sin against her husband. The priest directly says: 'And does your husband know of it?' 'No,' she says. 'Well then, don't tell him of it.' And he explained to her why she was to keep silence, that as she had sinned, she must suffer, but that he must not suffer for it."

"They always say that," puts in Aunt Mary thoughtlessly, and meeting Aunt Julia's inquiring gaze, she adds, "I have heard of many such cases where the priests said that."

"Well she comes straight home from confession and says to her husband, 'I went to the priest and told him all about my sin.' 'What sin?' And there it was. What! . . . Scenes and explanations. He wants to shoot himself and she wants to shoot herself. He wants to kill her, to kill the other man, to kill himself. . . . *À la fin des fins* he goes to sea, and she, after throwing all the children on the old Poltavsteffs' hands, goes off to her beloved and sets about getting a divorce. After two months the other man cannot stand her any longer and runs away from her. She takes poison, the doctors save her life, and then she goes off to Paris. She has been there now already three weeks, and there are very very ugly rumours about her." . . .

"Oh, how sorry I am for the old Poltavsteffs!" says mamma: "how dreadful it is for them!"

"I said a long time ago that she was in a dangerous way," says Aunt Julia.

Mimotchka nods her head affirmatively.

"Well, *à propos* of love affairs," says Aunt Sophy, "is it true that in the Caucasus, at the springs, there is so much flirting going on?"

"Ah, don't mention it!" answers mamma, smiling. "What things we saw and what things we heard! And Variashski, too, just imagine!" . . .

"And wasn't there anyone after Mimi?

Est-ce qu'il y a eu quelqu'un pour te faire la cour ? . . . Et personne ne t'a donné dans l'œil ? " . . .

" Quelle idée, ma tante ! . . . Why, there was no one there. At least, there were many sympathetic, agreeable people, but nobody of that sort." . . .

And Mimotchka, smiling her old Petersburg smile, shakes her head in denial.

" And is nature really so beautiful there ? " asks Aunt Julia ; " Vava goes into ecstasies about the mountains."

" But they didn't see anything," said Spiridon Ivanovitch regretfully. " How was it you never went to Bermamout ? Why, I wrote and told you to go. To be at Kislovodsk and not go to Bermamout ! Oh, you ! . . . you were among the real mountains and never went to see them."

" But there was no one to go with," said Mimotchka, defending herself. " The

X——'s had left before our arrival, and somehow we three never managed it alone. I really did so try to go and see everything."

"Yes, it must be very lovely there," says Aunt Mary, looking through the stereoscope at some views of the Caucasus that Vava had brought back. "How beautiful this is! What is it?"

"This?" says Mimotchka, bending over Aunt Mary to look through the stereoscope. "This is the 'Castle of Love and Treachery.' They are rocks that look like a castle, and that is what they are called."

"And is it really as beautiful? Did you go there?"

"Yes, I went there on horseback. . . . It's very beautiful, especially by moonlight—c'est féerique."

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